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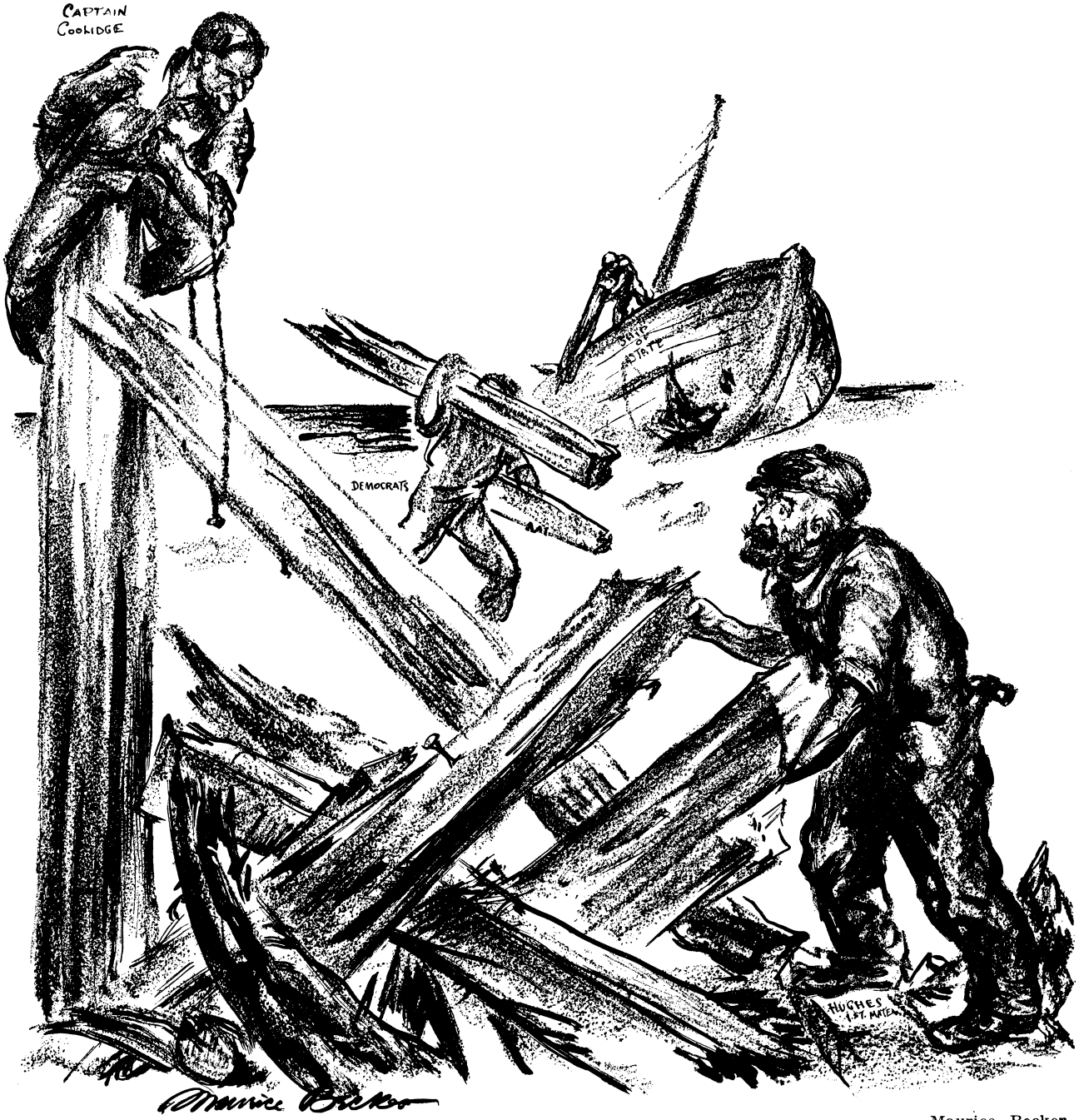
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They must build a platform from the wreckage of the Ship of State.

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They must build a platform from the wreckage of the Ship of State.

# THE LIBERATOR

Vol. VII, No. 6 [Serial No. 74]

June, 1924

## The Birth of the Working Class Soul

By C. E. Ruthenberg

**T**HE birth of the soul of a child takes place, according to modern psychologists, when the child becomes conscious of itself.

This conception of soul, of course, has nothing to do with the metaphysical or biblical conception. According to the modern viewpoint, the soul is that something which makes us conscious of ourselves as separate, distinct individualities, and which expresses itself outwardly in the personality of the individual.

The birth of the soul of a social class takes place, similarly, when that class becomes conscious of itself as a separate and distinct group with its own aims and ideals and needs. A social class gains its soul when it becomes conscious of its group aspirations, enters into a struggle to realize those aspirations, and suffers and makes sacrifices for its aspirations. A social class developed to that point becomes an entity, something distinct from all other groups in society.

We are living in a period in the United States today in which the forces which create the soul of the working class are moving towards fruition. In the June 17th Farmer-Labor convention there is the promise of the birth of the working class soul in this country.

### I.

There are many people in the United States, even among those who profess to accept the Marxian science, who sniff at the idea that anything new is happening in this country. These people point to the history of the last fifty years and insist that what is taking place in the United States today is but a repetition of what has happened before. They point to the Greenback Party, the Populist Party, the Progressive Party of 1912 and declare that the present movement among industrial workers and farmers for independent political action is but a repetition of these past movements which will prove as ephemeral as the efforts of the past.

According to this viewpoint, nothing new can happen in this country. We have had in the past rising waves of discontent, which have manifested themselves in the effort of the group which suffered under the intensified evils of the movement to organize itself for political action, and the present movement among the workers and farmers is only another response to a similar situation. The industrial workers and farmers, the argument goes, have suffered more severely in recent years, and hence we have a new wave of discontent which will rise to a certain height and then subside and disappear as did the waves of discontent which manifested themselves in the Greenback Party and the Populist Party, and

which resulted in the Progressive split from the Republican Party in 1912.

Scott Nearing, for instance, in a speech before a Rand School class, declared, "The history of political parties in the United States shows pretty clearly that the new parties have arisen at the points where there were two economic groups having clearly defined differences of economic interest. There are no such groups at the present moment."

This viewpoint is a complete denial of the validity of Marxism. Those who uphold this viewpoint must maintain that there has been no change in the character of the capitalist social order in the United States since the '80s nor any change since 1912, or if the changes in the capitalist system of production are too palpable to be denied, then they must maintain that there is no difference in the class relationship under the capitalist system between the period of the development of the great trusts and the pre-trustification period. Again, they must maintain that there is no difference in the class relationships in capitalist society which has reached a high imperialist development and the period prior to this imperialist development.

Probably none of the persons who hold this viewpoint outlined above would be willing to argue that the class relationships in the United States today remain the same as they were in the '80s or that they are the same as they were in 1912. But they seem to be willing to argue that "things don't change" in the matter of the workers and farmers becoming conscious of their interests and of themselves as a class.

### II.

The reason there has not hitherto been definite conscious class crystallization in the United States is to be found in the economic and political history of this country.

In Europe, sharply drawn and harshly maintained class divisions have existed for a thousand years. In Europe, the workers under the capitalist system are the descendants of exploited classes which have fought and struggled against the ruling exploiting class for many centuries. With such a background, with the exploiting class of the past merely appearing in a new role, the development of class consciousness and class action came earlier than it could in the United States, which has an entirely different history.

The history of the United States is that of a vast virgin country newly settled by immigrants from Europe. In such a country, the period of crystallization of both the exploiting capitalist class and the working class would necessarily be a longer process. Class crystallization could not take place until the vast virgin natural resources had definitely come



into the grip of a developed capitalist social order. The second factor which has held back the development of a conscious class struggle has been the illusion of democracy and equality which has been so sedulously fostered by the exploiting class throughout the entire history of this country, and which had its stronger support in the tradition which grew around the grandiloquent phrases the "fathers" of 1776 and 1789 used in laying the foundation of government.

The period of free economic opportunity and the traditional illusion about democracy and equality could not persist forever. The development of the capitalist system of production ended the economic opportunity and the use of the governmental power by the capitalists to defend their privileged position was bound to destroy eventually the tradition of democracy and the illusion of equality in this country. This process was enormously hastened by the war. In the trial by blood and fire during the war, the American capitalist class became more conscious of itself as a class. It was obliged to use the government more fully as a medium for uniting itself and expressing its unified power during the war, and this experience has taught it to rely upon the same instrument in its struggle against class opponents in this country.

The development of imperialism has been greatly hastened by the enormous profits made by the American capitalists in the war, and has been even a greater factor in making the centralized government at Washington the Executive Committee of the capitalist class.

The history of this country during the years since the end of the war is that of a new epoch so far as governmental interference in the class struggle is concerned. The capitalists are relying upon and fighting through the government as in no other period of American history. Governmental interference in economic relations has been greatly extended at the slightest provocation. The government steps into every industrial dispute of a major character to fight the battles of the capitalist exploiters.

Under these conditions are things the same? Is this brutal use of governmental power without any effects on the exploited groups? The answer to these questions is before our eyes in the growing movement of industrial workers and farmers to enter the political arena and fight against the capitalists for control of that governmental power which the capitalists use so effectively in their own interests.

What is happening in the United States is what was bound to happen under the capitalist system. This country is not immune from the laws of social development. A highly developed capitalist system of production will have as its reflex a definitely crystallized working class. A capitalist class which has reached a high stage of imperialist development—meaning that the government acts openly as its agent—must produce as its reflex a working class conscious of its political interests, fighting for political power for itself.

### III.

What is happening today in the United States is no new ephemeral wave of protest. We are entering into a new stage of the development of the class struggle. The forces within capitalist society are reaching a climax. The soul of the working class is being created. The creation of a working class with a soul—that is, a working class conscious of itself as a class, conscious that it has a historic mission to perform, ready to fight and sacrifice and suffer in order



Proletarian Mothers

Michael Adlery

that its aspirations may be fulfilled, is not the fulfillment of a moment. The soul of the working class can only be born through long suffering and travail.

Though this be true, the June 17th Farmer-Labor Convention will stand as a historic date in the development of the American working class. Out of this convention there promises to come a group of a million or more of workers and farmers who consciously enter into the struggle against the rule of the capitalists. No greater single achievement could be looked for in the present historic moment than that a million organized farmers and workers should be arrayed in the conscious struggle to wrest the governmental power out of the hands of the capitalist class.

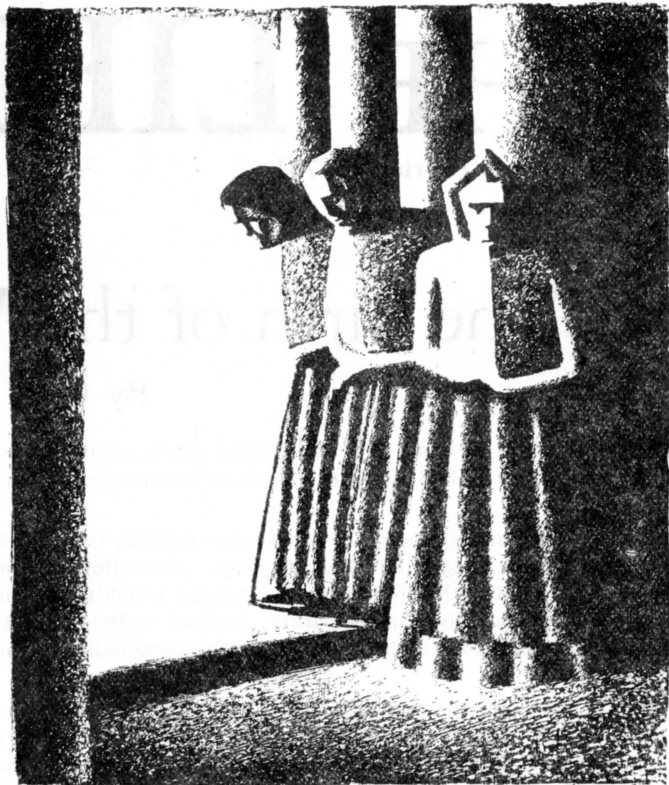
Once the break with old traditions has been made, once the workers are organized in a separate, distinct political organization which stands for their class interests, they will move forward quickly. In the battles which they fight, they will learn the lesson of solidarity. They will gain a clear vision of their mission as a class.

Many men and women who for years have given their services to the working class movement in the United States, have lost hope because of the slow development of the American labor movement. They have concluded that in the United States the day of revolutionary struggle was far away. In doing so they have forgotten, if they knew, the underlying laws of social development. Capitalist production has moved forward. With it is coming a new development of the working class movement. The soul of the American working class is being born. The revolutionary struggles lie before it.



Proletarian Mothers

Michael Adler



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# The Dawes Plan

By Scott Nearing

**D**AWES aims to do two things in his report: present a practicable scheme under which Germany can pay the costs of the war, and provide a way of making her do it.

The principles on which he proceeded are well understood by all capitalist diplomats, as they have been followed religiously in the exploitation of weak, undeveloped countries by powerful, militarist empires. This is the first time, in modern history, that they have been applied to the exploitation of one strong nation by another.

When a weak nation like Haiti owes money to the bankers of a strong nation like the United States, the state department of the strong nation forces a treaty upon the weak nation under which a portion of the revenues of the weak nation shall be applied to the payment of the interest on the loan. In such cases, a simple assignment of revenues is ordinarily sufficient to accomplish results. The Dawes report goes farther and takes industrial collateral, in the form of bonds, under which the payments appear in the form of interest on investment, guaranteed by the government and by the factories and railroads of Germany.

There are four main provisions in the Dawes report. The first provides for the organization of a bank, under Allied supervision, which shall have the sole right to issue paper money in Germany for the next fifty years and which is to be "entirely free from governmental control or interference." The second provides for the assignment, to the Reparations Commission, of the following revenues of the German government: receipts from customs, alcohol, tobacco, beer and sugar. All of these revenues, in excess of 1,250 millions of gold marks per year will be turned back to the German government. The third provides for the organization of the railroads under a private company, and for the issuing of 11 billion gold marks in bonds and 15 billions in stock. These bonds go to the Reparations Commission, and the interest on them at 5 per cent, plus 1 per cent for sinking fund will yield the Allies 660 million gold marks per year. The fourth provides that the industries of Germany shall be bonded to the extent of 5 billions of gold marks, and that these bonds shall also be turned over to the Reparations Commission. The interest on them will be 250 millions per year. These provisions take effect gradually, but by 1928 Germany will be paying the Allies 2,500 millions per year, in addition to the deliveries of coke, coal, etc., provided for under the Treaty, and these payments will continue, at the discretion of the Allies, for at least fifty years. By that time Germany will have paid more than 120 billions of gold marks in addition to deliveries in kind, and in addition to the amounts which she has already paid.

The Dawes plan puts the Treaty to work. It is the most comprehensive scheme ever proposed for the exploitation of one strong nation by another. Government revenues, the financial system, the railroads and the industries are all included in the mortgage.

Two comments should be made at this point: the right to issue paper money in Germany for the next fifty years is vested solely in a bank which the Allies control—a private bank. This gives the Allied bankers a strangle hold over

the entire economic life of Germany. Then, again, the railroads are to be turned over to a private company as a substitute for government ownership. Thus private, banker control takes the place of government control in German economic life.

Incidentally, this new bank is to float a loan of 800,000,000 gold marks which will be taken up in the Allied countries. The plan provides for "co-operation between the Allies and Germany in securing political conditions which will incline the investors of the world favorably toward the German loan on good security," or, more briefly, no revolution!

Crudely, in 1919, the Allied diplomats drafted a treaty under which Germany was to pay, and under which the world was to be "rehabilitated" immediately. But the world of Europe disintegrated. Now, five years later, the Allied bankers have drafted a scheme under which the capitalist system will be guaranteed against revolution in Germany, and under which it will be possible for Europe "to enter upon a new period of happiness and prosperity unmenaced by war."

This story requires no moral, but it might be well to summarize its conclusions thus:

1. The principles heretofore applied by capitalist empires to the exploitation of weaker nations will hereafter be applied to the exploitation of defeated rivals.
2. The nation that loses the next war will be dismembered, stripped of external wealth and enslaved.
3. The dismemberment will apply to raw materials and resources; the stripping will apply to the property of the ruling class; the slavery will be for the workers, in the form of longer hours and lowered standards of living.
4. Since the greatest calamity in life will follow defeat in the next war, no time must be lost in preparing to win it.
5. The Dawes plan is a plan for the next war.

## The Unseen Road

**B**EYOND the wall there runs a road,  
Beyond the road a hillside slopes,  
Beyond the hill the orchard's load  
Hangs ripened with the harvest hopes.

The wall was built long years ago,  
And longer yet—or so it seems—  
They shut me in this hall of woe,  
That severs me from all my dreams.

O tell me that the road will run  
Beyond the hill, once more, for me!  
That golden apples, kissed with sun,  
Await my hand when I am free!

Harrison George.

# The Wisdom of Lenin

By Max Eastman

*An Introductory Essay*

LENIN'S death has left orphans in every city of the world. Hundreds of millions of grown-up people felt toward him as a child feels toward its father—that his purity of heart was absolute, and that his wisdom was ultimate. And that feeling was never violated by any act or word of his. Lenin was the most adult human being in history. You can not imagine that he ever did or said a childish thing. He assumed that the goal of human life is to live greatly, and the first step toward that goal is to create a great society, and to that step he gave his life. He gave without consciousness of the gift, without blabbing about his emotions, without advertising his ideals. He simply knew from childhood that his all-powerful mind belonged to the oppressed people of the earth. The tribute we owe to Lenin is to study and ascertain as perfectly as we can, just what was the peculiar wisdom of that mind.

Lenin was a Marxist. And that means that he had abandoned the hope that a great society can be produced by evangelical methods—by exhorting excitable people, and arguing with reasonable people, about the beauty of it. He saw that Marx had laid the foundations of a science of revolutionary change, which bears the same relation to these Utopian efforts that the science of chemistry does to the blind experiments of alchemists in the Middle Ages. These alchemists tried to change one substance into another without defining the structure of the first substance, or determining the forces which control it. Evangelical and Utopian reformers are trying to change human society in the same way. Marx defined the economic structure of human society for those who wish to change it, and he exhibited the class-interests which control it. He showed that the only dynamic force capable of exploding the old organization and producing a new one, favorable to the growth of freedom and justice and sincerity in mankind, is the enlightened self-interest of the working-class. He founded a science which, but for the vested interests opposing it, might have been called the Mechanics of History. And when we say that Lenin was a Marxist, we mean simply that Lenin was not a magician or Mediaeval conjurer in political changes, but a master of the Mechanics of History.

The first period of Lenin's public life, from 1893 to 1900, was devoted to the propagation and application of that Marxian science in Russia. Lenin wrote in 1894 the first book expounding the principles of Marxism in the Russian language, "What Are the Friends of the People?" He was only twenty-four years old then, but his book is a mature and powerful polemic against that peculiar kind of utopian socialism which had dominated the Russian revolutionary movement for a quarter of a century.\* Lenin also wrote

\*Lenin's book was confiscated and destroyed by the Czar's government, and only last year two-thirds of it was discovered in Berlin and in the archives of the secret police, and republished by the Moscow soviet. It illustrates Lenin's character that his priority in this field should have to be "discovered" at so late a day. All his life long he had heard Plekhanov and Peter Struve credited with this first Russian exposition of Marxism. But he was not interested in the personal question, he was interested only in the object. He was really a man without egotism.

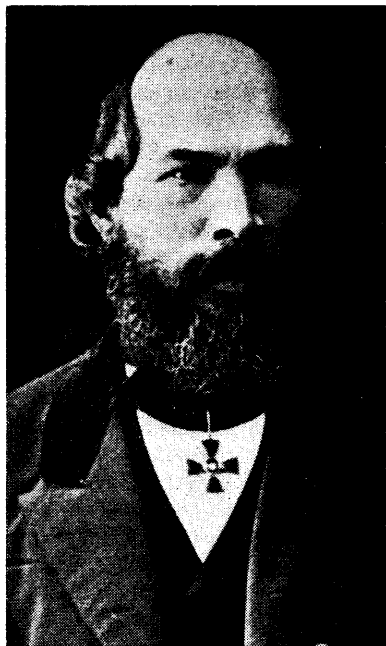
in those earlier years a book on "The Development of Capitalism in Russia," which is an exhaustive examination and proof of the application of the Marxian science to his own country. One of the glib ways in which our liberal and "socialistic" intelligentsia like to dismiss the Bolsheviks, is to say that they are trying to follow the rules of Marxism in a backward agrarian country where they have no application. Before they would read fifteen of the five hundred pages of this book, they would realize that they are babbling childishly about a thing that was investigated and settled with Darwinian thoroughness by this great man before his political career began. It was settled by an examination of the statistical facts. Lenin appears in this book as a scholar and scientist of the first order. There were few better educated people in the world; there was none who excelled him in the practical mastery of Economics. Nevertheless it is still essentially the wisdom of Marx that he is expounding here. It is a thing that Marx might have done. We do not find in these theoretical books the peculiar wisdom of Lenin, which is practical.

## CHAPTER I

### The Engineer of History

THERE is a tendency among Russian Communists to put into circulation the word "Leninism." And it is natural, I suppose, in the absence of the man to try to erect his past judgments into a static thing. But these judgments were characterized primarily by their mobility and reference to a changing state of facts. Lenin did not create an *ism*. He did just the opposite thing; he took an *ism* down out of the intellectual heaven, and made it live and work. His name will stand side by side with that of Karl Marx in the history of human culture exactly because of this difference. Marx abolished utopianism out of the theory of socialism; Lenin abolished utopianism out of its practice. Marx discovered the mechanics of history; Lenin was the first great historic engineer. Lenin was the first leader of mankind who, instead of unconsciously expressing the dominant social forces of his time, analysed those forces and understood them, and built a machine which enabled him to guide the one he believed in to its goal. All promiscuous hero-worshippers and patriotic text-book readers to the contrary notwithstanding, Lenin was the first man who ever consciously and in a profound sense, made history.

It is a pity that Lenin's followers did not introduce him to the western movement with an explanation, with some translations from his earlier writings, some hint of the "course of sprouts" they have been through. His mature and terrible wisdom arrived in our little circles of "home-industry socialism" with an appearance like madness. And many honest revolutionists were frightened away by the sudden apparition of this gigantic authority, crumpling and tossing aside their most sacred little ideas without prelude or apology, who might have accepted it if they could have seen it grow. Therefore, I think there



Lenin's Father

in their struggle for more wages, for shorter hours, for the abolition of fines, for hot water to make tea in the factories. Lenin wrote his first pamphlets about unjust fines, about hot water. He entered into the smallest daily problems of that class which he had determined should become the sovereign of Russia. He identified himself with them, won their confidence, took the lead in one of the biggest strikes in their history—the strike of the textile workers, involving more than 300,000 men. He was arrested and shipped away to Siberia by the czar, but he had laid the foundation which enabled him to ship the czar to Siberia and beyond that, and not the czar only, but the whole institution of capitalist government. He had identified himself **concretely** with the economic movement of the working-class. He had brought the idea of the socialist revolution into union with the dynamic force which alone could achieve it.

And that, in my mind, is the first basic principle in Lenin's method of revolutionary engineering: That the inspired revolutionary idealist should participate personally in the petty and unrevolutionary daily struggle of the workers for a pittance of life. He should make himself the indispensable man in that struggle.

It may seem that this is a rather obvious deduction from the proletarian theory of the revolution. It was so little obvious in America, that when Eugene Debs became converted to the proletarian theory, he promptly abandoned his strategic position within the **proletarian movement**, and went on the stump and the lecture platform. That was one of the biggest single misfortunes in the history of American labor. Another was the formation of the I. W. W. as a distinct revolutionary union—again a separation of the conscious revolutionists from the unconscious masses already organizing in the A. F. of L. In Europe the remoteness of “socialist politicians” from the

is no better way to explain Lenin's system of historic engineering, than to describe the critical moments in its historical development.

#### Personal Identification With the Masses.

The first moment was in 1896, when Lenin organized in the city that now bears his name, a tiny group of Marxian agitators called the “Union for the Liberation of Labor,” and placed himself at the service of the most advanced section of the Russian proletariat. He gave his heart and hand to the workingmen and women of St. Petersburg

movement of the masses they were supposed to lead, became a common scandal, and gave rise to the syndicalist movement which denied the necessity of the political struggle altogether, and built up on a Marxian basis a new and more plausible kind of utopianism. Nobody who was in contact with Lenin ever made any of these immature mistakes.

“It is self-evident,” he said in 1900, at the beginning of his political career, “that the task which the social-democracy is called on to fulfil, is the implanting of socialist ideas

in the mass of the proletariat, and organizing a revolutionary party inseparably bound up with the elemental movement of labor.”\* And twenty-one years later, outlining the plans for a “purgation” of the Communist Party, his first statement was: “We must purge the party of those elements who withdraw themselves from the mass.”\*\*

#### Ideological Independence of the Masses

The second historic moment in the development of Lenin's system was his return from exile in Siberia in 1900, his founding together with Martov, Plekhanov and others, of the illegal journal “Iskra,” and undertaking the organization of an all-Russian underground society of “Professional Revolutionists.” In order to appreciate that historic moment, and understand just what I mean by saying that Lenin abolished utopianism out of the practice of socialism, it is necessary for you to know the position of the socialist movement in Russia at that time. In 1898 nine delegates from all the Marxian circles in Russia had met secretly in a little square house in Minsk, adopted a Constitution and Manifesto, declared themselves a Social-Democratic party and member of the Second International, and then walked out into the arms of the police. Practically everybody connected with the party had been arrested, not only in Minsk, but all over Russia. The movement was completely smashed, and the party remained merely an idea, joining together in their thoughts a body of disheartened people scattered all the way from the jails of Odessa to the Arctic Circle.

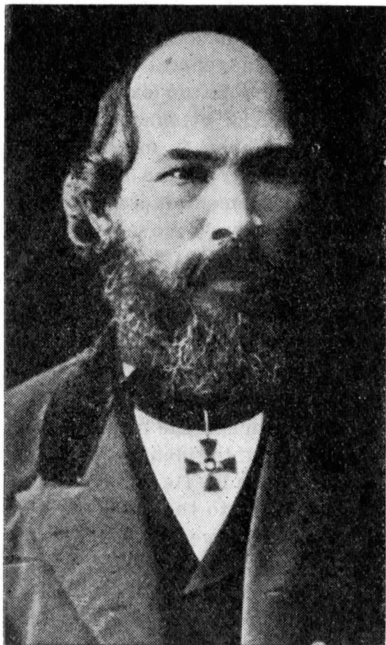
And these people were not only disheartened but they were dominated by a philosophy of disheartenment, a renunciation of the essence of the revolutionary struggle which went by the same name of “Economism.” This the-

\*Announcement of the Publication of Iskra,” Dec. 1900.

\*\*Article in Pravda. Sept. 21, 1921.



Lenin's Mother



Lenin's Father

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The first moment was in 1896, when Lenin organized in the city that now bears his name, a tiny group of Marxian agitators called the "Union for the Liberation of Labor," and placed himself at the service of the most advanced section of the Russian proletariat. He gave his heart and hand to the workingmen and women of St. Petersburg

movement of the masses they were supposed to lead, became a common scandal, and gave rise to the syndicalist movement which denied the necessity of the political struggle altogether, and built up on a Marxian basis a new and more plausible kind of utopianism. Nobody who was in contact with Lenin ever made any of these immature mistakes.

"It is self-evident," he said in 1900, at the beginning of his political career, "that the task which the social-democracy is called on to fulfil, is the implanting of socialist ideas



Lenin's Mother

ory, propagated by two underground journals, advocated that the party should abandon the political struggle, the struggle against czarism, and confine itself to championing the economic demands of the workers. The revolution—said these plausible Marxians—will of course involve the overthrow of the czar. But that is incidental, and that is really the business of the bourgeoisie. The essence of the revolution is deeper than that. The essence of it is economic. And we ought not to alienate and alarm the workers by talking about an incidental political thing which they do not understand. The real task is to organize them on the basis of what they do understand, their economic needs, the demand for more wages, shorter hours, the abolition of fines, for hot water . . . . That was, you see, a distortion by extremism of the very wisdom which I described as the first principle of Lenin's system. And the vogue of that theory of Economism, combined with the ferocious attacks of the government, had reduced the Marxian movement by the year 1900 to a black standstill. While the struggle of the workers was growing enormously, there was not a light of intellectual leadership to be seen anywhere in Russia, when Lenin came back from Siberia.

But Lenin had arrived at his full stature as a revolutionary engineer. He had looked over the proposition of overthrowing the czar and establishing the basis of a true society in Russia, exactly as coldly and unreligiously and with the same iron-hearted practicality with which Julius Caesar would look over a proposition of conquering Gallic provinces, or James J. Hill the development of a railroad kingdom in the Northwest. He knew exactly how it had to be done, and he proceeded to do it. No words but his own can convey the sense of inflexible force and massive all-dominating intelligence, that suddenly arrived in that scene of weakness and confusion with Lenin's little illegal journal "Iskra," and his book "What To Do?" An adult, efficient, business-like, military, merciless, impersonal intelligence was at last consecrated to the most poetic and beautiful of human dreams. Even today if you read that book, you feel that you are living through one of the great moments in the history of the human mind.

And in the first forty pages of that book Lenin develops a second basic principle of his method of revolutionary engineering, which might be expressed as follows:

While identifying yourself personally with the narrow economic struggle of the workers, do not acquiesce by one word, or for the length of one moment, to the narrow and bourgeois political understanding which accompanies it. Do not bow down to the elemental instincts of the masses. Take the position of ideological and political leadership, without any false modesty or sentimental democratism, or any thought about what class you belong to, or fear that somebody will call you an "Outside Agitator," or a "High-brow," and without any parade of renunciation before a supposedly independent process of economic determinism. Take the position of a leader and a teacher, and tell the workers the whole revolutionary truth all the time. Tell the workers of Russia that it is the mission of their class to stand at the head of the oppressed masses in an armed insurrection which shall overthrow the czar, and overthrow the dictatorship of the industrial kings, and establish a government of economic justice in which they will be the sovereign power. Every moderating of the revolutionary ideology is a weakening of the movement.

"The question stands thus: Either a bourgeois or a socialist ideology. Here there is no middle ground. (For humanity has evolved no 'third' ideology, and in general in a society torn by class contradictions there can be no extra-class or super-class ideology.) Therefore, every attenuation of the socialist ideology, every stepping aside from it, means by that very fact a strengthening of the ideology of the bourgeoisie. They (the 'Economists') talk about elementariness. But the elemental development of the workers' movement goes straight toward subjection to the bourgeois ideology. . . . the elemental labor movement is trade unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means just exactly the mental enslavement of the worker to the bourgeoisie. Therefore, our task, the task of the social-democracy, consists in a struggle with elementariness. . . ."

In this extreme manner Lenin attacked the disposition of the "Economists" to modify the idea in identifying themselves with the class that should achieve it. He whipped them with scorn for what he called "servility" to the elementariness of the masses. . . . But at the same time he whipped the Terrorists for ignoring the power of the masses, and worshipping the lonely devotee of ideas. He took the value out of both these attitudes, and found the true equilibrium of a revolutionist:

Personal identification with the struggling class; ideological independence of them, and complete, explicit, continual expression of the revolutionary ideology.

#### Being Extreme and Being Popular

History is full of people who had this arrant faith in an extreme idea, and this determination to express it absolutely and in full, both in and out of season. However wise they may have been, these people were usually regarded as cranks, and their influence was limited by that fact. On the other hand history is full of people who, believing in an extreme idea, believed also in "staying with the crowd," not isolating themselves, not "throwing away their vote"—as a result of which sensible belief they moderated the expression of their idea, shaving down the sharp edges of it, until it ceased to signify exactly that distinction which had given it value. Between these two types of advocates most extreme ideas have got lost. Lenin taught the art of "staying with the crowd" not only passively, but actively—he taught the art of making one's self a daily necessity to the crowd—and yet at the same time advocating a revolutionary idea explicitly and in its most angular and unqualified form all the time. He stressed both these arts equally, and developed them to an equal point of perfection, and that distinguishes him from every other idealistic leader in history. It is, after the science of Marxism, the primary source of his power.

An example of this two-sided wisdom is the communist policy toward the trade unions, which was also outlined by Lenin in his first book, "What To Do?" It had been maintained by the "Economists"—and it seemed a plausible deduction from the Marxian theory—that the goal of their agitation should be to make the trade unions completely socialistic. Organized labor and the Social-democracy, they said, should be merged into one. Lenin took exactly the opposite view.

"Every Social-democratic worker," he said, "ought to the extent of his ability to co-operate with and actively work in the trade unions, but it is not at all to our interest to demand that all the workers of the trade unions should be socialist.



That would narrow the extent of our influence upon the mass. . . . The broader these organizations, the broader will be our influence on them, manifested not only through the elemental development of the economic struggle, but through the direct conscious activity of the socialist member of the union upon his companions."\*

In that you see the essence of Lenin's tactical wisdom. To identify the unions with the Social-democracy would have withdrawn the unions from the unconscious masses, and at the same time it would have obscured in a cloud of trade union problems the revolutionary purity of the socialist idea. Lenin kept the Social-democracy and the trade unions distinct, but at the same time he sent the Social-democrats to work in the unions. Thus he succeeded in staying with the crowd, and at the same time abiding by his idea.

Another example of this wisdom, was Lenin's view of the relation of the Social-democracy in Russia to the broad masses of the population. Here again it seemed a plausible deduction from the proletarian theory, that the Social-democrats should ignore the masses, and confine their attention to the working class alone. Lenin demanded that having identified themselves with the revolutionary working class, they should "go into all classes," they should become veritable "tribunes of the people, knowing how to respond to every manifestation of governmental caprice or oppression, wherever it happens, and whatever class or group it touches." He demanded that they should express and organize the indictment of the whole Russian nation against their government. And to those rigid priests of the idea, who reproached him with reformism, with anti-Marxism, and asked him in what then would consist the class character of the movement, he replied:

"Just in this, that we are the organizers of this all-popular indictment, we, Social-democrats; that the explanation of every problem raised will be given in an inflexible Social-democratic spirit, without any connivance at intentional or unintentional distortions of Marxism. . . ."

I give but a hint of the application of those two principles which seem to me fundamental in the wisdom of Lenin. He did succeed in becoming a tribune of the people, and yet remaining at the same time the most inflexible, arrant and incorrigible rebel in history.

#### Economic Determinism and Practical Thinking

There are two impractical attitudes common today in America, which Lenin swept out of his way in this book, "What To Do?" The first is the assumption that "economic determinism," as Marx used the expression, denies the importance of scientific ideas. I remember that even John Dewey, who rarely falls down on a point of erudition, makes this erroneous assumption in the first pages of his War-book about Germany. Economic determinism no more denies the power of ideas to change the course of history, than the determinism recognized by Mendel in writing the laws of heredity, denies the power of a breeder to produce new varieties, or than the "psychic determinism" insisted on by Sigmund Freud, denies his power to cure nervous disease. It assures him of that power.

Marx founded a science, and the foundation of every science is a recognition of some new system of causal determination. The fact that in the sciences whose subject is

mankind, the scientist himself seems to fit into the general chain of causes, and deny his power to make use of his own discovery, is an old and undeniable intellectual difficulty. It guarantees a permanent job to the professors of philosophy, but it does not delay the scientists in their work. Marx accepted the way out of this problem suggested by Hegel, who said that freedom is the knowledge of necessity. In the words of Engels: "Freedom does not consist in an imaginary independence of the laws of nature, but in the knowledge of those laws and the possibility based on that knowledge of compelling them to function toward defined ends."\*

It is obvious that a man with a revolutionary will like Lenin's, could not tolerate the distortion of Marxism into a philosophy of inaction, and he falls upon the tendency of the "Economists" in this direction with a force that is worthy of the most violent defender of the "Instrumental Theory of Knowledge."

"The assertion of these authors," he says, "that no efforts of the most inspired ideologist can distract the labor movement from the path determined by the interplay of the material elements with the material means of production, is perfectly equivalent to a renunciation of socialism: and if these authors were capable of thinking their thoughts through to the end, dispassionately and consistently, as everyone ought to think who ventures into the arena of literary and social activity, then nothing would remain but for them to fold useless hands on empty breasts. . . ."

"Without a revolutionary theory, there cannot be a revolutionary movement."\*\*\*

#### The "Outside Agitator"

Another common American folly that Lenin swept out of his way in this book, is the assumption that because Marxian science points to the industrial proletariat as the only force capable of liberating mankind, therefore it is somehow inconsistent and ridiculous for anyone who is not himself a proletarian, to be a Marxist and strive scientifically for the liberation of mankind. How often you hear the voices of our supremely logical editorial-writers reminding you that "Lenin himself is a bourgeois," that the Russian Communist Party is only half workingmen. And these remarks are supposed to discredit both Lenin and the Russian Communist Party on the one hand, and the proletarian theory of Marx on the other. As a matter of fact they discredit nobody but their authors, for Marxism never denied the value to the workers' movement of intellectuals of bourgeois origin. And Marxism as it was applied to Russian conditions by Lenin, asserted their value in a most aggressive and extreme form.

"There cannot develop in the working class," Lenin said, \*\*\*\* "a consciousness of the opposition of their interests to the whole contemporary political and social superstructure—that is, a social-democratic (communist) consciousness. That has

\*\*\*\* "So long as we do not know a law of nature, that law, acting beyond and outside of our knowledge, makes us the slaves of 'blind necessity.' Once we know that law, acting independently of our will, of our consciousness . . . we are the lords of nature."—Lenin. ("Materialism and Empirio-Criticism," p. 220.)

\*\*\*\* "What To Do?" p. 55.

\*\*\*\* "What To Do?" p. 40.

\*\*\*\* "What To Do?" pp. 47 and 54.

\*"What To Do?" P. 113.

\*\*"What To Do?" P. 94.

to be brought in from the outside. The history of all countries testifies that all by itself the working class is able to work out only a trade union consciousness—a conviction of the necessity of uniting in unions to carry on the struggle with the bosses, to extract from the government the passage of this or that law indispensable to the workers, etc. The science of socialism grew out of those philosophic, historical and economic theories, which were developed by cultivated representatives of the possessing classes. The founders of contemporary scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged, so far as concerns their social position, to the bourgeois intelligentsia. And exactly the same way in Russia, the theoretic study of Marxism arose in complete independence of the elemental growth of the workers' movement, arose as a natural and inevitable result of the evolution of thought among the revolutionary-socialistic intelligentsia. . . . This does not mean, of course, that workingmen do not participate in the development of these theories. But they participate not in the capacity of workingmen, but in the capacity of socialist theorists . . . participate, in short, only when and in so far as they have succeeded to a greater or less degree in mastering the science of their age and advancing it." These extreme statements were vigorously attacked in the party convention of 1903 by Comrade Martinov. He drew up against Lenin a whole series of quotations from Marx and Engels, and from various social-democratic programs in all languages, to prove that he was theoretically wrong in assigning to the proletariat this "modest, not to say negative role in working out its own socialist ideology." And he asserted that there was a great practical danger in Lenin's attitude—it opened the way to a separation of the proletarian party from the mass of the workers.

Lenin did not definitely answer the theoretical part of Comrade Martinov's speech. He merely admitted that he had been a little extreme. "The Economists had bent the stick in one direction," he said. "In order to straighten the stick it was necessary to bend it in the other, and I did that." But that he had ignored the role of the workers practically, Lenin indignantly denied. And he had only to point to the other parts of his book in order to refute this statement. For if he had been a little extreme in describing the value of the revolutionist who comes from the bourgeois world of culture, bringing scientific ideas and intellectual loyalty to them, he had been no less extreme in asserting that it was the "first and most pressing duty" of this "intelligentsia-revolutionist" to go into the workers' movement, and there "co-operate in the development of the worker-revolutionists who should stand on the same level from the standpoint of party activity with him." In short, here as everywhere he had seen the necessity of two things, loyalty to the idea and union with the mass. And in the circumstances existing in Russia at that time, he had found the right practical equilibrium between them.

At the time when I write, 46 per cent of the members of the Russian Communist Party are industrial workers, 25 per cent are peasants. These are not fixed proportions—nothing is fixed but the motive in the wisdom of Lenin. There have been times in the past when the majority of industrial workers was very great, and the party executive has recently decided to admit into the party over a hundred thousand new members from the proletariat. But there was never at any time an attempt to disguise the fact that the trained scientific revolutionists—most of them "Outside Agi-

tators"—wield a dominating influence in the party counsels. They wield that influence through no mystery of graft or political wire-pulling, but just through the mystery of Lenin's wisdom. They wield it because they stand side by side with the workers in their daily economic struggle, and they explain to them the broader political and historic possibilities and limitations of that struggle continually, and with extraordinary candor and completeness. They tell the whole truth all the time. If it were not for the appearance of a moral dogma, I might call that the second basic principle of Lenin's system of historic engineering—tell the whole truth all the time. Lenin made a more extensive use of truth than any other political leader ever did. He used it instead of oratory to convince his constituents, and he used it instead of lies to blind his enemies.

(Continued in the July Liberator)

## Zero Hour in the Factory

**T**HERE'S hissing and panting of steam  
And a throbbing everywhere,  
As I hang for a breath of air  
Over a dusty window-sill  
Out of a room that is never still  
From whirl of wheel and thump of press.

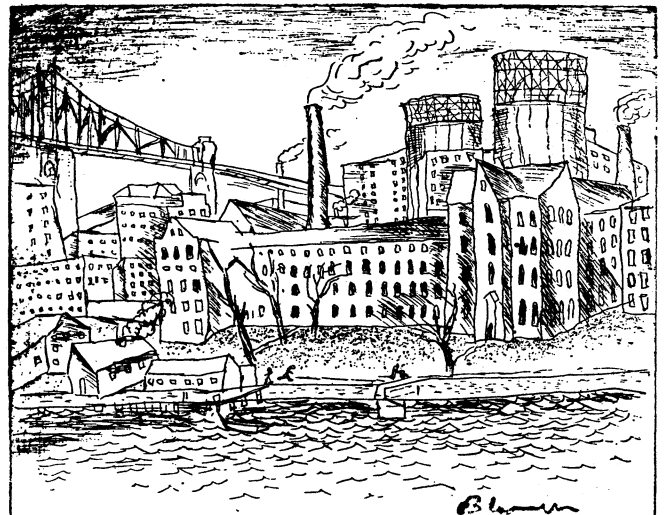
The whole thing seems so meaningless . . .

Below me on the railroad track  
An engine tries to move a train,  
But groans and coughs and pulls in vain,  
The hot smoke spouting from its stack.

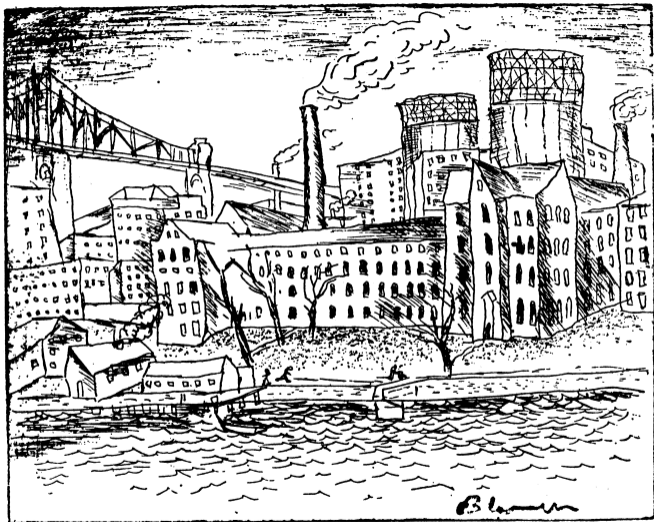
There seems no sense to life at all—  
Work and heat and smoke and sound . . .

I am one of the sparks that pour  
From a belching stack, to glow and soar  
For a moment, only to die and fall,  
A cinder-speck on the sooty ground.

Charles Oluf Olsen



A. Blanch



A. Blanch

# The Elections in Germany

By Max Bedacht

WE are revolutionists. A revolution is a fundamental change in the social structure. Yet we interest ourselves in elections though elections are neither vehicles of revolutions, nor manifestations of them. Elections are merely a manifestation of the life of the existing order. But Germany is in the throes of a social revolution. And the elections of the republic afford us an opportunity to see how far that process of revolution has developed, and how far the decomposition of the body of the republic has gone. Thus even an election in Germany becomes an important event for the revolutionist.

There were about six dozen parties with some five thousand candidates in the field. This is not a joke but a significant phenomenon. Its significance has its lessons also for the workers of the United States. These six dozen parties spell the utter impossibility of the present order to continue a rule under the pretense of democracy. It shows the progress of the revolutionary development of the class struggle. It shows how far the necessary destruction of democratic illusions with the masses has gone.

When class antagonisms have reached a climax and manifest themselves in fierce economic battles, then the workers can no longer be fed with political phrases. Then these masses judge the quality of political parties and political systems by their substantial results and by the help that their political parties afforded them in these economic struggles. The disillusionment sets in with the parties first. Before the masses learn that it is the system that is essentially responsible for the ills from which the masses suffer they become dissatisfied with the parties. And the six dozen parties give an indication of how far that dissatisfaction has developed. Before the politically dominating forces in the republic will permit the masses to learn that it is the republic itself that exudes the stench of its utter rottenness into the nostrils of the suffering masses they will cultivate within these the belief that the fault lies with the parties. To satisfy the masses of the voters these forces meet all their illusions and present them with all kinds of political monstrosities called parties to save the democratic republic. But this is the last step on the downward path of capitalist rule in Germany, because the conviction of the rottenness and bankruptcy of the old parties is nothing else than the first subconscious sign of the conviction of the rottenness and bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy and its parliamentarism. The multi-party parade in the last general elections in Germany was nothing but a last and desperate attempt to save the machinery of political rule of capitalism.

But there the significance of the many parties in the German election does not end. There are still many revolutionists who believe in the obsolete Lassalleian thesis of the one reactionary mass outside of the proletariat. To these the developments in Germany shout in a thundering voice: You are wrong! The nearer capitalism comes to its fall the more hopelessly the capitalist class becomes split up within itself. Capitalism has undergone a far reaching development. It has developed within itself the domination of finance capi-

talist-imperialist groups. But it also carries within itself as a ballast the remnants of its former stages of development in the form of social and economic groups, whose interests are indissolubly linked up with the capitalist system and yet are opposed to the present ruling strata of capitalism. All of these groups, deadly enemies of the proletariat or a proletarian revolution, are at the same time bitter enemies of their own class brothers of high finance. The proximity of the revolution does not straighten out these differences but aggravates them and they are in themselves a sure sign of the impending doom of capitalism. Of course it would be folly to expect these groups to destroy each other and thus save the working class the trouble of defeating capitalism and the capitalist class. But it would be an equal folly to disregard these struggles as immaterial for the manoeuvring of the forces of the proletarian revolution. In Germany these internal struggles of the capitalist class grow in intensity even to the point of armed clashes. We repeat, however, that these struggles will not bring about the final bankruptcy of capitalism in Germany but are only an unflinching indication of its impending debacle.

To go further in the analysis of the German elections it will be necessary to give a brief outline of the main lines of division in the political grouping of the forces. There are about five or six general divisions and party groups. The rest of the six dozen evolved each from some of this half dozen and each one revolves around one of them now.

1. The Nationalists. This is the party of the landed aristocracy, aristocratic army officers as well as higher officials in the machinery of the state. This party is monarchist. In the days of the old regime this party ruled on the strength of a compromise with industrial and finance capital.

2. The Peoples' Party. This is the party of Stinnes, the party of industrial capital. It is neither monarchist nor republican. It wants to rule and accepts as a basis for its rule the status quo. If there is a monarchy they will rule as courtiers, if a republic, they will cloak themselves with the toga of republican virtues.

3. The Center. This party is the party of the catholics. But at the basis of its catholicism there lies the interest of a combination of industrial and agrarian capital which finds the veil of catholicism just convenient enough to gather together groups of voters that could never be gathered on a strictly economic program of this group. But that center party is suffering from the influence of this time. The intense class struggle of the day brings out into clear relief the economic policies this party follows in its activities. And gradually the most beautiful catholic phrases cannot screen any more from the eyes of the catholic workers the anti-workers' policies of the party. The class struggle penetrates the Center party and divides the catholics into those that do everything but eat, and those that do nothing but eat.

4. The Democrats. This is the party of finance capital. It is republican because from example, as for instance in the United States, republicanism seems to afford the most excel-

lent opportunity to fleece the people in the name of the people.

5. The Social-Democrats. This party was once the party of the workers. The greatest reason why so many people in the United States do not understand the actions of this party is that they still consider the Social-Democratic Party a party of workers. But today that party is in composition and in policy the typical party of the petty bourgeoisie. Its leaders are former labor leaders, now officials of the state. The mass of its worker constituents have deserted the party and their places were taken by petty shop keepers and the lower officialdom of the state. With its tremendous influence over the working masses this party was the only efficient means in the hands of the bourgeoisie to stop the revolutionary action of the masses. The bourgeoisie did use it. But it used it only as an emergency tool, and discarded it the moment its task was performed. But although the party could not again the confidence of capitalism it succeeded in alienating itself from the workers.

The Social-Democratic party was blind enough to believe that it would be the permanent arbiter between the forces of reaction and the forces of revolution. It did not see that at some point of the struggle between these forces there is only the alternative of aiding either reaction or revolution. The alliance of a wing of the Mountain with reaction against Robespierre not only succeeds in throwing the bloody head of Robespierre at the feet of a vindictive reaction, but it draws the whole Mountain into the maelstrom of reaction and drowns it in the blood of its members. Capitalism needed the Social-Democratic party to defeat the revolution. But it kicks this party into the political garbage heap the minute this task is performed. The Social-Democrats are a party neither of the past nor of the future. They cannot love modern capitalism, and they hate proletarian rule. They are dissatisfied with the present; but they fear the future. They are neither capitalist fish nor proletarian flesh. They are petty bourgeois, bound to be squeezed in between the forces of a dying past and a struggling future. In the last moment of the struggle between these forces they are bound to remember their bourgeois parentage and become the bitterest antagonists of the forces of the future. But that cannot save them. Physically they will fall victims of their vacillation. Morally they will fall victim of their treacheries. In the revolution they will choke to death in their own blood, while an enlightened working class will feel nothing but contempt for them.

6. The Communist Party. The Communist Party is a revolutionary party. It is the only proletarian political organization that was in the field. Its participation in the parliamentarism of the bourgeois republic seeks to help the masses of the workers to free themselves from their illusions. They use democracy to show it up as the mere pretense it is. They use parliamentarism to show its utter uselessness as a substitute for the mass struggles of the workers. As the minds of the working masses penetrate the fog of Social-Democratic and bourgeois democratic illusions they turn to the Communist Party for leadership. This party has made its mistakes in the past. But in sincere self-criticism it has come out of all these crises as a stronger and better party.

It was clear before the election that in it there would be registered the degree of development of the revolutionary struggle. Everybody predicted and expected a defeat of the

middle parties and a growth of the extreme left and the extreme right. It seems a paradox that a leaning toward extreme reaction should be accompanied by a leaning toward clear cut revolution. But that is the sign of the time.

The issues become clarified. The continuous grouping and regrouping reaches its climax in the ultimate drawing up of the two armies between whom the final battle will have to take place. The election shows us how complete that process of crystallization of these two forces is at this moment.

The parliamentary election fixes this grouping in a snapshot at the moment of election. But it does not stop the constant process of further regrouping. And although the picture of the grouping at this moment, the Reichstag, will be the same a year from now, this picture will then be a false one. It will then no longer reflect the real situation, for the real forces have a way of negating false pictures. The facts assert themselves and insist on recognition. The outcome of the election of May 4th will not retard the revolutionary struggle that is bound to come.

The center parties were not entirely crushed by the election. But they were weakened. Their power as a force between the left and the right is rapidly diminishing. As an independent force they are already as much as eliminated. The struggle gets into its final stages. The extreme right with a fascist dictatorship on the one hand, the Communists with a proletarian dictatorship on the other.

The communists have increased their following tenfold. They march into the new Reichstag with 62 members. But that victory raises new problems. The battle field for them is not shifted from the election struggle among the masses to a struggle between the elected parliamentarians. They know that the process of regrouping of the forces goes on upon the basis of the concrete developments. They know that the next stage is a further disintegration of the middle parties. They know that their victory depends on their ability to draw toward themselves and attach to themselves the disillusioned masses who desert the center parties. And this task can be accomplished only if the communists will succeed in linking up their parliamentary struggles with the mass struggles of the workers. The parliamentary position that the communists have conquered can, at best, supply an opportunity for a better position of the workers in their mass struggles. But it cannot replace these mass struggles. Even among their four million voters there are still many illusions to be overcome. To make four million fighters for the working class out of the four million voters for the communists, that is the task of the hour.

The outcome of the election will precipitate the coup from the right. With great alarm the right sees not only the growth of its own power, but the terrifying growth of the communists. When these forces faced a crisis in 1918 they were weak, demoralized and discredited. Their safety then lay in the treachery of the socialists. But now, thanks to the socialists, they have reorganized, they have strengthened their position and they are ready to take the offensive. They know as well as do the communists that their new advent to power will not be the fruit of a parliamentary victory. They are preparing for a fascist coup d'etat.

But the proletariat will not face this new danger leaderless and dependent on treacherous agents of capitalism. They are prepared for battle, organized and led by a tried and trained general staff, the Communist Party of Germany.

# The Strange Funeral in Braddock

By Michael Gold

**L**ISTEN to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.  
Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.

In the town of Braddock, Pennsylvania,  
Where steel-mills live like foul dragons burning, devouring  
man and earth and sky,  
It is spring. Now the spring has wandered in, a frightened  
child in the land of the steel ogres,  
And Jan Clepak, the great grinning Bohemian on his way  
to work at six in the morning,  
Sees buttons of bright grass on the hills across the river,  
and plum-trees hung with wild, white blossoms,  
And as he sweats half-naked at his puddling trough, a fiend  
by the lake of brimstone,  
The plum-trees soften his heart,  
The green grass-memories return and soften his heart,  
And he forgets to be hard as steel, and remembers only  
his wife's breasts, his baby's little laughters, and the  
way men sing when they are drunk and happy,  
He remembers cows and sheep, and the grinning peasants,  
and the villages and fields of sunny Bohemia.

Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.  
Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.

Wake up, wake up! Jan Clepak, the furnaces are roaring  
like tigers,  
The flames are flinging themselves at the high roof, like  
mad yellow tigers at their cage.  
Wake up! it is ten o'clock, and the next batch of mad,  
flowing steel is to be poured into your puddling trough,  
Wake up! wake up! for a flawed lever is cracking in one  
of those fiendish cauldrons,  
Wake up! and wake up! for now the lever has cracked, and  
the steel is raging and running down the floor like an  
escaped madman,  
Wake up! O, the dream is ended, and the steel has swal-  
lowed you forever, Jan Clepak!

Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.  
Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.

Now three tons of hard steel hold at their heart, the bones,  
flesh, nerves, the muscles, brains and heart of Jan  
Clepak,  
They hold the memories of green grass and sheep, the  
plum-trees, the baby-laughter, and the sunny Bohemian  
villages.  
And the directors of the steel-mill present the great coffin  
of steel and man-memories to the widow of Jan Clepak,  
And on a great truck it is borne now to the great trench  
in the graveyard,  
And Jan Clepak's widow and two friends ride in a carriage  
behind the block of steel that holds Jan Clepak,  
And they weep behind the carriage-blinds, and mourn the  
soft man who was killed by hard steel.

Listen to the mournful drums of a strange funeral.  
Listen to the story of a strange American funeral.

Now three thinkers are thinking strange thoughts in the  
graveyard.

"O, I'll get drunk and stay drunk forever, I'll never marry  
woman, or father laughing children,  
I'll forget everything, I'll be nothing from now on,  
Life is a dirty joke, like Jan's funeral!"  
One of the friends is thinking in the sweet-smelling  
graveyard,  
As a derrick lowers the three tons of steel that held Jan  
Clepak.

(LISTEN TO THE DRUMS OF THE STRANGE AMER-  
ICAN FUNERAL!)

"I'll wash clothes, I'll scrub floors, I'll be a fifty-cent whore,  
but my children will never work in the steel-mill!"  
Jan Clepak's wife is thinking as earth is shovelled over the  
great steel coffin,  
In the spring sunlight, in the soft April air,

(LISTEN TO THE DRUMS OF THE STRANGE AMER-  
ICAN FUNERAL!)

"I'll make myself hard as steel, harder,  
I'll come some day and make bullets out of Jan's body,  
and shoot them into a tyrant's heart!"  
The other friend is thinking, the listener,  
He who listened to the mournful drums of the strange  
funeral,  
Who listened to the story of the strange American funeral,  
And turned as mad as a fiendish cauldron with cracked  
lever.

LISTEN TO THE MOURNFUL DRUMS OF A STRANGE  
FUNERAL.

LISTEN TO THE STORY OF A STRANGE AMERICAN  
FUNERAL.





*Louis Ribak*  
**Louis Ribak**

# The Lost Legion Found—by its Jailors

By General Prisoner No. . . .

FROM within the heavy walls of Leavenworth a murmur is heard. It is the voice of men whom the profit-society chooses to term outcasts. It is the voice of drafted labor, of workers compelled under all the penalties of this life and threats of the "life to come," to defend the profit-system for the masters of the country. The capitalist press has at last heard this voice, and lest the glaring injustices complained of should weaken the carefully-preserved glamour of patriotism, has undertaken a campaign for the "Lost Legion." Victims of a misplaced faith, these men have fought and bled for "democracy," and have died a living death, forgotten by the very masters they defended, for five and a half years since the cessation of the glorious war to end war!

The telling of their story is, as I have intimated, an "inside job." In my position as general prisoner assigned in charge of the detail work in the Vocational Training Department at the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, I was compelled to conduct an exhaustive interview with each prisoner entering the institution, preparatory to his assignment to the various manual departments of the prison. These interviews brought out the facts of his early life, his education, trade or business experience, army record, sentence by courts-martial, and fitness or unfitness for the hard manual labor to which he had been sentenced for various periods of from one to fifteen years. Inasmuch as these interviews were between prisoner and prisoner, conducted in private, the story of these soldiers,—their experience in the trenches; their life in the prison stockades of France; their courts-martial and subsequent entry into Leavenworth—all go to form a vivid chapter in my prison experience. I was probably on more intimate terms with these ex-soldiers than any other man in the prison.

This chapter properly begins with those scorching days from May to July, 1919, when every breath of air within the walls of the Kansas prison seemed to sear our lungs and shrivel our bodies. Not long before this date the first of the overseas prisoners arrived. I interviewed them and found numbers who complained bitterly of the treatment they had received in Prison Stockades One and Two under the tender care of Lieutenant Hard-Boiled Smith and his officers. Soon they began to arrive in trainloads, from sixty to a hundred and fifty each week, marching into the prison dressed in odd assortments of cast-off soldiers' garments, covered with the filth and grime of a long railroad journey through which they had ridden hand-cuffed, sometimes shackled, and in cars that were poorly ventilated because of rigid order to keep windows closed that none might escape. Their heads had been shaved; their faces, under the grime, were so ghastly that their own mothers would not have recognized them; and with no stretch of our imaginations we could well believe every phase of their protest against army brutalities; French stockades, rotten food, and the lack of exercise and fresh air en route from Brest to Leavenworth.

These matters formed a minor refrain to their entire protest. They told their stories with variation in detail only, and with scathing invective and bitter denunciation. Most of them had been unfortunate enough to suffer temporary confinement in the larger prison stockades under the "iron rule" of Smith and his associates. They complained of ptomaine poisoning, decomposed food, beatings with clubs or blackjacks in the hands of surly guards or officers, and countless methods of cruel punishment devised as a part of the "breaking" process. This process had continued in some cases almost a year, and in many cases for six months or more. Finally they were shipped to Brest, "muddy Brest," and hence to America.

On board for a week or more, they charged that through negligence or malicious intent, they were forced to remain below deck in irons where they had insufficient air and no sunshine. Some swore that they never saw the sky from Brest to New York and upon arrival were herded from the boat, into the trains, and started on the long journey without opportunity to rest, shave, or bathe. They related gruesome tales of the trip with its long nights of hellish torture caused by the chafing of the heavy handcuffs upon bruised and tender wrists, as the restless cuff-mate twisted or turned in his sleep. One story they told of two men who, hand-cuffed together, hurtled through an open window they had managed to raise. What became of the pair, they were unable to ascertain.

The major refrain of their complaint was the more important from an objective point of view, because here circumstantial evidence convicted the military of gross disregard of their own "justice" in the matter of sentence as well as failure to consider extenuating circumstances such as length of service, personal bravery, and the cessation of hostilities. A few, and a very few, of the thousand or more who arrived, had against them serious charges such as manslaughter or rape. The great bulk had been convicted on minor charges such as breaking restrictions, disrespect to an officer, or absence without leave. The sentences were long in all cases, ranging from one to fifteen years, and in the greater majority of these, from three to ten years. A few cases will serve to illustrate the injustices involved in these sentences.

I remember a slim, round-shouldered farmer boy hailing originally from the state of Georgia. He had seen front-line duty, and had been severely gassed, and wounded in the fleshy part of the right hand, having had the flesh torn away by a piece of shrapnel. The wound had healed into a twisted, gnarled, sensitive member of little practical use. This cripple, captured A. W. O. L., had been sentenced to five years at hard manual labor instead of to the care of competent physicians, which even the military "justice" would seem to demand. I remember his drawn face and dull eyes as he came into my office after work, complaining that he could not use the eight pound drilling hammer on the First Gang where he had been assigned to "whip steel," as prisoners term hand-drilling in the quarries. He intreated



me to reassign him, charging that the military were obeying sealed orders from France to hound and break him. I succeeded in sending him to the hospital.

I remember the case of a young Negro who had served as officer's orderly for ten months in France. In the course of special duty at or near first line trenches, according to his story, he was ordered to carry a sealed packet to a detachment in advance of their position and where he would be forced to cross exposed territory. He detoured to take advantage of shelter, delivered the packet, returned, was thrown into irons and eventually sentenced to five years at hard labor for disobedience of orders.

Then too, we must not forget the cases of the unfortunate members of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry—victims of this brutal military system. Who does not know of circumstances under which these unfortunate men were convicted and sentenced? Of the utter disregard for the justice so much vaunted in the capitalist press as one of the main principles of American democracy? Of the convenient forgetfulness of the length of service of most of these men? To those who do not know the circumstances surrounding and leading up to the so-called Brownsville riot, I will endeavor to make the matter clear. It was during the administration of the "Grand Old Party,"—the one party which the capitalist press feeds to the Negro voters as the "savior of the Negro race," that this riot occurred.

Several of the members of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry, U. S. A., awaiting transport to France, visited the city of Brownsville on pass. A group of them came upon a city policeman beating a Negro woman with a club. One of the soldiers remonstrated with the officer, asking why the woman was not arrested instead of assaulted. The officer turned upon his questioner and struck him with his club. The assaulted soldier's comrades came to his rescue and severely manhandled the officer. Townsman who were in the vicinity came to the help of the policeman and by force of numbers succeeded in driving the soldiers away.

These men went immediately to their camp, where they enlisted the aid of several more members of the regiment, and went back to Brownsville. This time they were armed. In town they encountered a mob, who were bent upon doing violence to the woman whom they deemed responsible for the entire affair. The soldiers endeavored to prevent this, and for a time were successful. But the townsman gathered in such overwhelming numbers that they soon had the soldiers on the run. Some one in the mob fired upon the fleeing men. The soldiers turned and fired upon their pursuers.

For this affair, not the assaulting policeman, not the white mob, but the "damn niggers" had to pay the penalty. Sixty-seven were put on trial in a community flaming with race-hatred. After an outrageously farcical trial conducted in the spirit of a lynching, thirteen of the Negro soldiers were hanged and fifty-four were sentenced to terms ranging from twenty years to life in federal penitentiaries.

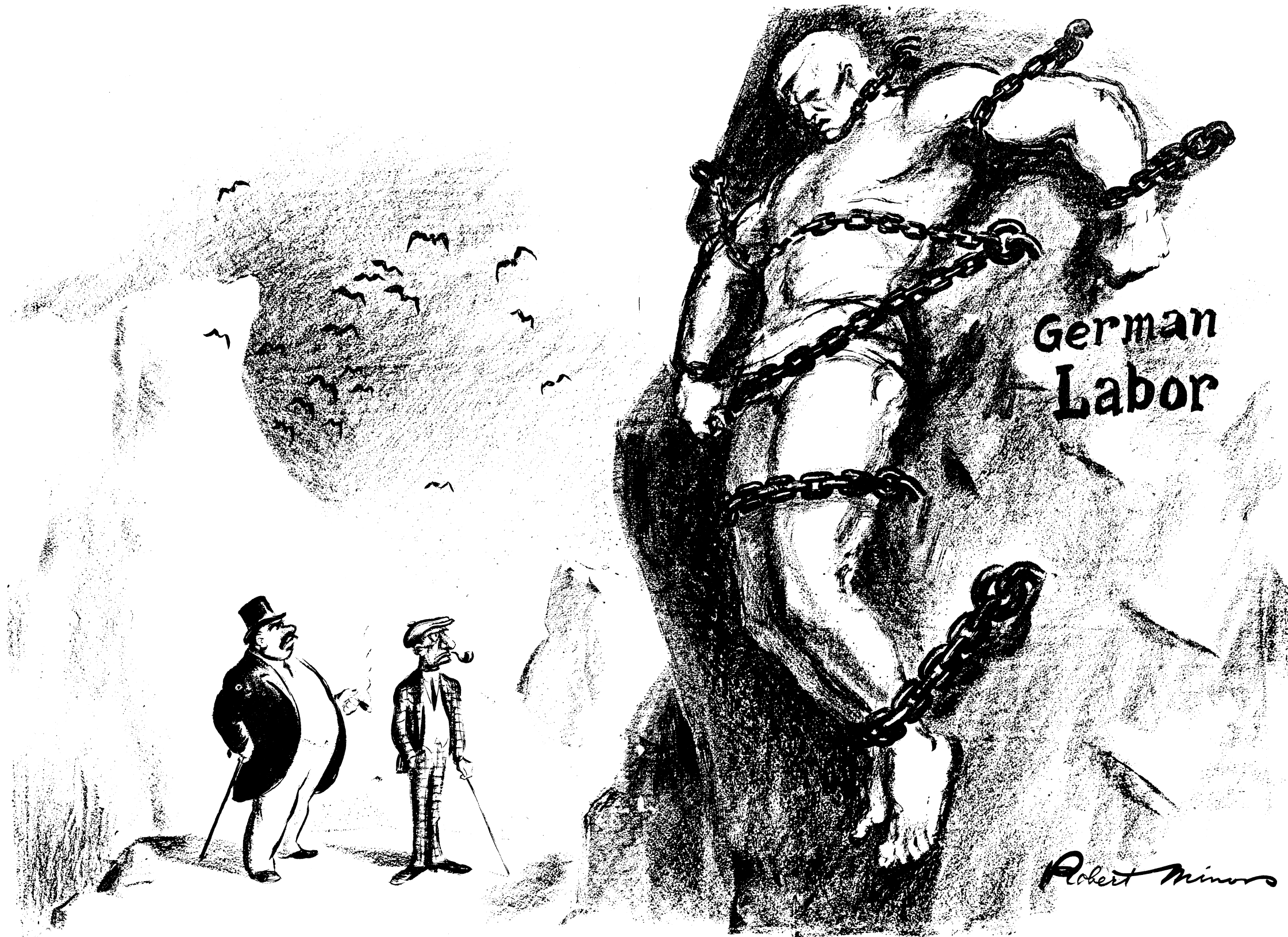
It was my good fortune to know one of these men during the short period of time before he was transferred to the federal prison, and in that short period of time I was impressed with the fact that these colored soldiers had been the innocent victims of circumstances which were as disgraceful as the mob-lynching at Helena, Arkansas, or any of the other lynching orgies perpetrated by the sunny south in its more sadistic moods. These poor 'convicts'—ex-soldiers, "Americans all"—languished behind prison bars these many years, without one voice being raised in protest against

their incarceration. At last, an effort was started by a comrade who had been discharged from the army. He came to Chicago, started a movement among the Negroes of the city, and was finally permitted to lecture in several Negro churches. This man read letters which he had received from his ex-comrades-in-arms, detailing the brutalities they were forced to suffer. Asked how it happened that these letters were permitted to leave the prison, he told of the ingenious method invented by the prisoners to send out letters unknown to their "masters."

The result of the lectures delivered by the ex-soldier was not long in becoming visible. Petitions were sent around to churches, hotels, theatres, pharmacies, billiard parlors, grocery stores, and every other place where Negroes were known to go. These were signed, and delivered. What was done with this gigantic petition, is a matter of history. What also was done in regard to the request made by the petitioners is also a matter of history. Two or three men were paroled, and a few more had their sentenced commuted from life to the mere bagatelle of thirty years. For this glorious generosity, on the part of the government of the most "democratic nation of the world," these men are expected to be "grateful."

Another case comes to my mind, again a southern boy, entitled to service and wound stripes. He had been sentenced to five years for flirting with a German girl while on guard in the occupied zone. The charge was, disobeying orders. He, like many others, complained bitterly at the injustice of the whole army system. To his mind, so recently steeped in the sentimental ideology of war-time patriotism, had come a rude and harsh awakening. How gladly had he, a volunteer, marched forth amid the blare of trumpets and the waving of flags, on his mission in behalf of "democracy!" He had expected to return a hero. Instead, after fulfilling his mission, he found himself with health destroyed and facing five years in an army prison.

These are a few of the outcasts serving time with the Lost Legion. For the capitalist press to have lifted a voice in behalf of these men five years ago might have inspired some renewal of misguided hope and faith in the hearts of the men. But to uphold the brutal military system and to help it draw these men into its clutches and then, at this late date, to agitate for their release is a bitter mockery. On the part of the capitalist press which helped to lure these men into the trap, the agitation for their release is almost as great an insult as the original incarceration. I remember too well the "old timers" who had served less than four years when I arrived. The ravages of prison scurvy had given them a prison pallor and left them ugly snags instead of teeth. The filth and infection due to lax sanitary discipline and even more lax sex discipline had made other ravages upon their bodies and minds. And so, letting my mind turn back to those dusty office hours and the ghastly faces of the broken wretches who poured out their tales of woe as they sat across from me, I am inclined to prophecy. My prediction is, that when and if the capitalist press effects the release of the Lost Legion, (and they have not been released to date) the therapeutical forces of rehabilitation agencies of capitalism will have a hard task to heal the mental and physical lesions of these men in time to enlist them for "democracy's" next war. They may, instead, find men entirely disillusioned and already started on a more sound social education.



## Prometheus Bound

Morgan: "Keep him tight, Dawes; if he gets loose, it's another soviet republic."

Robert Minor

# A Day in the Wool Room

By Edith Summers Kelley

FOGARTY'S packing yards lay spread out all year long under a brilliant sky and basked lazily in sunshine. On the outskirts of the space allotted to buildings long-horned cattle waiting for the butcher's knife surged in corrals and restless sheep bleated incessantly. All around stretched the wide southwest country, gray with only a hint of green, arid and sunbaked, dotted with shanties.

The yards looked wonderfully clean and peaceful for a place where half a hundred cattle and twice as many sheep and hogs were butchered daily. In the killing rooms of a morning the killing floor ran with blood, to be sure, and the acrid reek of death thickened the air. But the place was all mopped up in the afternoon and the offal disposed of so neatly that there was hardly ever much stench of decay, that is, except in the fertilizer plant and the wool room.

You descended to the wool room by a short flight of concrete steps. The earth had been shovelled away to give light to the basement windows. Here there hung the breath of half decayed sheepskins, a horrible, sickening stench, dreadful to bear to those who had not grown used to it through long habit. The skins had to sweat and begin to decay before the precious wool could be loosened from the hides. Old Henry, the boss, who had been working in wool for fifty years, didn't seem to mind it at all; and Gus, the Swede sailor, who had been at Fogarty's for seventeen years, never spoke of it any more except to get a rise out of a greenhorn. But Figaro Contraras, the handsome young Mexican who worked at the washing machine, chewed tobacco to keep from turning sick. And before he went home he always tried to sneak into the smoke room and stayed there until he was nearly choked trying to smoke away the stink, because that night he would probably be going to the dance hall or taking a girl driving in his red bug. But no matter how much he smoked and washed and scented himself, that lurking sheep stink would come out of his pores whenever he got the least bit hot and sweaty.

Every morning it was part of Figaro's job to go into the sweat room and bring out truckfuls of hides for the wool pullers. The concentrated stench of a hundred hides hung up to putrify in one small room almost stifled him and he worked furiously to get the truck loaded. After that the air of the wool room seemed for a little while almost pure.

All morning at one end of the long, narrow room, he and Flavio Lopez, the long, lantern-jawed half-Mexican with decayed tombstone teeth, washed hides at the noisy washing machine, a great cylinder of revolving steel plates through which the water seethed and swirled. They wore oilskins and high rubber boots and sloshed about in three inches of water. They had to keep their wits about them too and watch what they were doing. For if one of the steel plates ever caught in the wool and dragged the slick, slimy, stinking hide into the whirling cylinder it would take a man's hand too if he didn't act mighty quick. Gus, the old Swede sailor, was minus a finger that had gone into the machine.

When they paused in their work and looked down the length of the room they saw a long stretch of low, raftered ceiling festooned with dustwebs and scraps of wool. The

cement floor, which grew less wet but more slimy as it receded from them, was cleft in the middle by a broad band of sunshine from the open door. Near the door, tubs of unspeakable refuse, oozy with slime, waited to be taken to the fertilizer plant. Beyond, in a row, bent over greasy wooden frames, the other men pulled wool from the half rotted hides, chewed, spat, cursed their sore fingers, told smutty stories, sang ribald songs, loafed when Henry the boss was not looking and asked the time of those who had watches. There was Gus, the Swede sailor, the biggest liar in the wool room, and Long Steve, and Edd, the poet, who was always making up rhymes about everything and who had written what seemed to Figaro a really pretty poem about the girls who wrapped up the hams and bacon. Then there were a couple of fellows from the Ozarks who never had much to say and a lot of Mexicans who spoke mostly in grunts or in their own language, a tongue which Figaro understood but despised.

Over the rattle of the machine he often got snatches of the talk of these men. Long Steve, whose brother was a professor in a Middle Western college, but who himself had been a hobo most of his life, was always complaining.

"Aw hell," he would yawn, looking past the great, iridescent blowflies that buzzed in the window to the blue of the sky, clouded by grime and dustwebs. "I used to be healthy as a suckin' pig when I was on the road. Now my stomach's all shot to hell. I wish I was back on the road again. I'd be there, too, if it wasn't for that cursed woman."

"What keeps you, Steve? You haven't got any kids."

"No, thank God. But every cent of my savin's for the last three years she's put into that place that she's got in her name an' had before I married her, though it was most all my money that bought it. I can't touch a penny of it. An' I'll be damned if I'll give her the satisfaction of doin' me out of it. If it wasn't for that, when I got into the old bus to go home tonight I'd keep right on a-goin' as long as I could buy the gas. God, a woman makes a fool of a man!"

"Not if she bane a Greaser woman," corrected Gus, the Swede, flopping another hide onto his slimy stand. "I bane had two Greasers an' neither one of 'em efer gave me much trouble. Only they will hafe kids. They don't ast for much—only cotton wrappers an' lots to eat."

"You damn betcha lots to eat!" chimed in Edd the poet. "A Greaser woman eats three times as much meat an' beans as a white woman. Besides, it's degradin'. No Greaser for mine. The whole trouble is with marriage. Marriage's been proved a failure every way you look at it. Nobody gets anything out of it but the parsons an' the lawyers. After my first wife died I swore I'd never get married again. Now me an' a widder woman lives together an' we share an' share alike an' she can go when she wants to an' I can go when I want to an' we have some respect for each other an' we don't neither of us feel tied up like we would if we was married."

He fell to singing blithely:

"O sweet Evaliner, if you'd only keep cleaner  
My love for you would never, never die."

"That's all very well," growled Long Steve over the noise of the singing. "You wait till somebody reports you. It's fine an' dandy bein' a free lover if you've got money. But if you're only a packin' house hand the Society for the Prevention of Vice'll like as not get you where the hair's short."

"If you boys knew what was good for you you'd leave women be altogether," advised Henry the boss, who was mopping up the floor. He was a little Englishman with the rich burr of the north country. Fifty years he had worked in the wool. Now, at seventy, though his hair was white and thin and all his nails were gone from the work in the wool and one finger cut away on account of blood poisoning, he still had the engaging smile and pink cheeks of a boy. He had lived all his life a bachelor, probably most of it a celibate, and gave all the credit for his good health to his beloved books.

"If you boys didn't bother with women," he went on. "you'd have time an' money for other things. Every night after supper I read an' study. That's what keeps me young. I read about how the earth grew, how men and animals grew, how languages and religions grew. There's no sport like it. Only I often wish I had somebody to talk to about it. If only I'd been a college man—"

"College man be damned!" cut in Long Steve, thinking of his brother the professor. "A bunch o' dried up mummies! Take all the money there is in the family to get educated, an' then live soft all the rest o' their days, gettin' fatter an' lazier every minute. Books wouldn't do nothin' to keep me young. But if I was only on the road again! Say, Edd, you ever been up in Oregon? God, that's a pretty country. If I was only up there hittin' the trail where it rains an' things grow, up there along with the big mountains an' the big trees, I wouldn't have no more stomach trouble. I'd be there, too, if it wasn't for that infernal woman."

"I'd a heap leaver be back on the land too," sighed one of the fellows from the Ozarks in a thin, falsetto ghost of a voice. "There a man plants his taters, grows a piece o' corn an' fattens a hog or two. On rainy days he don't hev to do no work, cep mebber cut a little stovewood. Come fall he goes a-huntin', an' in winter he kin set by his fire. An' if he works an' if he don't work hit's his own business. Nobody hain't never his boss."

"Cep mebber his wife," commented the other Ozarkian.

"Waal, mebber onct in a while his wife is," admitted the first. "But mostly wimmin keeps their place whare I come from. Here they gotta hev high-heeled shoes, hats with trimmin's 'stead of a decent cotton sunbonnet, an' boughten jackets. There hain't no holdin' my woman back sence we come here. Every Sunday she wants to go in the movie show. An' back home if she got to drive over to her sister's place onct a month she thought she was goin' a heap."

"Yaas, the wimmin is the ones that has it soft here. While we slave in this here stink an' slime, they gad around where the sun shines."

The snatches of this talk that penetrated as far as Figaro glanced off his brain and were lost. The fretful discontents of these older men were nothing to him. While he sloshed the slimy hides in and out of the washing machine or hung them dripping on the frames, he was thinking of the new cravat pin that he had bought last Saturday and of the shiny new shoes that he was going to buy next Satur-

day. He was thinking of the flower face of the girl that he had out in his bug last Sunday: the softly glowing dark eyes, the tempting lips, the peachbloom burning through the brown of her cheeks. He was thinking of other girls whom he had danced with the night before at the dance hall: Dolores Antunas, with her tip tilted nose and roguish black eyes that mocked at you, and Tillie Peters the American girl, who stirred him strongly because she was so different from him and from the dark and sturdy Mexican girls, so fair, so delicate and lily-like. Wrapped in his rosy imaginings, Figaro paid little attention to the other men. What had their driveling complaints to do with him,

Once he overheard old Henry telling the other men what was the early origin of the sign of the cross. He did not believe it, of course, and he was shocked, yet strangely pleased. Involuntarily he crossed himself. After that when he went to church of a Sunday morning and saw the cross above the belfry he flushed warmly, felt ashamed and crossed himself.

By noon the hides were all washed and hung on the racks and when the whistle blew everybody washed up and went outside to eat lunch. The older men slumped and plodded, their heads down, their feet dragging, like worn out cab horses. But Figaro Contraras lifted his strong young arms that shone like tan satin in the sunlight, yawned and stretched deliciously, felt the sunshine ripple over his brown body like a warm current, felt it penetrate through his flesh into his very bones, loved it as the lizard loves it. He flung back his head, breathed in great chestfuls of the winy southwestern air, and in an ecstasy of feeling warm and vigorous and glad that he was alive, he broke into a mellow laugh that flashed his brilliant white teeth as he lifted his face to the sunshine.

"That Greaser kid's feelin' his oats all right," grumbled Long Steve, with a glance that was mingled of admiration and envy.

"Wait a spell. Give 'im time," said Edd the poet.

They all sat in the sunshine on wool that was spread out to dry on a big platform. Grateful for the warm sunshine and the soft wool, they ate pressed ham sandwiches, pickles, hunks of pie and cake and washed them down with milk or perhaps coffee from a thermos bottle, deploring the dead days of beer, then smoked a cigarette or two. By that time the shortest three quarters of an hour of the work day was over and the whistle called them back to the wool.

Once Hedda Bjornson, the Big Swede's daughter, brought her father's lunch, because he had got into a wrangle with his wife that morning and gone off mad without it. Hedda, half Swede, half Mexican, was a bold, dark, handsome girl dressed in cheap store finery. Her green glass earrings dangled almost to her shoulders. She glanced scornfully at the "widder woman" of Edd the poet, who also had come with her man's lunch so that he might have a bite of something hot. Edd's woman, though kindly looking, was stout, double-chinned and middle aged, and whatever good looks she once might have had she would never have again. Hedda was glad she was not like that. Then her eyes happened to meet those of Figaro.

The first look that she cast at the young Mexican was her habitual stare of sullen indifference. She was not yet nineteen, but one sensed at once from that stare that she was wise in all the ways of her world and had probed the depths of disillusion. Under his gaze of ardent admiration

her stare wavered into a calculating smile tempered by just a ghost of the coquettishness that must have once been hers.

She was no sooner gone than Figaro approached Gus. "Say, Gus, is that girl your daughter? Say, she's a hell of a good looker. Say, I'd like—" And he proceeded to tell Gus with engaging boyish candour and in short, unequivocal words just what were his desires regarding Hedda.

Gus reached for a rake that had been used for spreading the wool.

"Yuh — — — young son of a bitch! I'll learn yuh to insult my girl, yuh lousy Greaser! I'll yust comb that slick black hair for yuh and comb yer brains out along with it."

He lit out after Figaro, who darted like a coyote in the direction of the sheep corral. The two disappeared behind the killing building.

"Well I'll be damned!" lazily ejaculated Edd the poet, throwing away the butt of a cigarette. "He gets all het up when somebody says the very thing he says himself. I heard him brag only the other day how his girl wasn't no man's fool an' allus saw to it she got her money. Ever since that sailor that she married when she was fifteen left her an' the three kids holdin' the sack, she's kept the latch string out for anybody that had the coin, an' everybody in Dry Flats know it. An' here he up an' boils over as if she was spotless as the Virgin Mary."

"Aw well, a father's got to let his natcheral feelin's come to the top onct in a while," yawned Long Steve, "specially when it don't cost him nothin'." Gus'll feel grand an' lofty after he's let off steam by chasin' Figaro a spell with that rake. Hell won't hold him."

They laughed with good natured cynicism and got up lazily as the whistle blew.

It was as long Steve had said. Having chased Figaro around the yards, Gus bore him no further ill will, but "pulled heads" amicably beside him all afternoon. All afternoon, too, he told bigger whoppers about his adventures by land and sea than he had ever told before. As his swollen and nailless fingers pulled the wool from the stinking scraps of skin that were called heads, his fancy roamed unhampered over his colorful past. His blind eye, shaded by a colored lens, seemed to glow with animation, as the glass caught the light from the window. But his good eye was kept busy watching out for maggots on the heads. He disliked to have the maggots crawl up his arms. But he brushed them away only surreptitiously and was facetious to Figaro about the latter's squeamishness.

"When you've worked in the wool long's I have, my young buck, you won't be so dainty an' ladified. Take a whiff off that, baby mine."

He held a more than usually putrified head under Figaro's nose while everybody guffawed.

The young Mexican dodged and gagged. Gus smiled, picked a maggot off his own arm and dropped it on Figaro's wrist.

"I don't mind the plain sheep smell," he went on, "but when it's mixed with the stink o' the scent that young feller puts on to go to the dances it has me near pukin'. That an' the reek o' the hair oil on his black scalp. Why don't yuh set at the other end where I can't smell yuh?"

"I wanta be clost to yuh, Gus, so's I won't miss nothin'. Every time you yab some feller in the yaw I wanta know all about it. Funny you're allus the guy that beats in every

fight you tell about. Didn't nobody ever yab you in the yaw? If you thought anybody'd swaller it you'd tell us you knocked Dempsey's an' Firpo's heads together an' left 'em lay."

Henry the boss, Long Steve and Edd the poet were talking about religion. It seemed to Figaro that they were always talking about religion. What sense was there to it? Why didn't they let be and take what the priest told them?

"It's this way," Henry was expounding in his gentle, college professor tone, "religions are made by people, not handed to them from somewhere up in Heaven. And all religions are much alike. They all had much the same beginnings and developed along much the same lines, varyin' only as the different civilizations varied."

"Civilization be damned!" growled Long Steve. "To Hell with the civilization that shuts us up here to muck all day in this slime an' filth. It's a fine an' dandy civilization for the slick preacher or politician that wears a broad-cloth coat made outa this stinkin' muck. But us that works all day in wool an' wears cotton don't get no good outa their civilization nor their religion neither. Religion be damned!"

"Well, I dunno," said Edd the poet reflectively. "I can't but think there's sumpin more to this life than what we see. I seem to feel it when I write my poems. Not that I got any use for church religion."

He stepped outside for a few moments and when he came back picked up the hose and began to wash down the floor, singing as he swung the nozzle:

"Now then John you have been drinking,

I can smell it on your breath.

If you do not stop it shortly

It is sure to cause your death."

"Hey, cut that out!" exclaimed Long Steve in a voice harsh with exasperation. "No layin' down on the job, Edd. You worked that dodge yesterday an' the day before. You get here an' pull your share o' heads same's everybody else. We ain't keepin' yuh here for a pet."

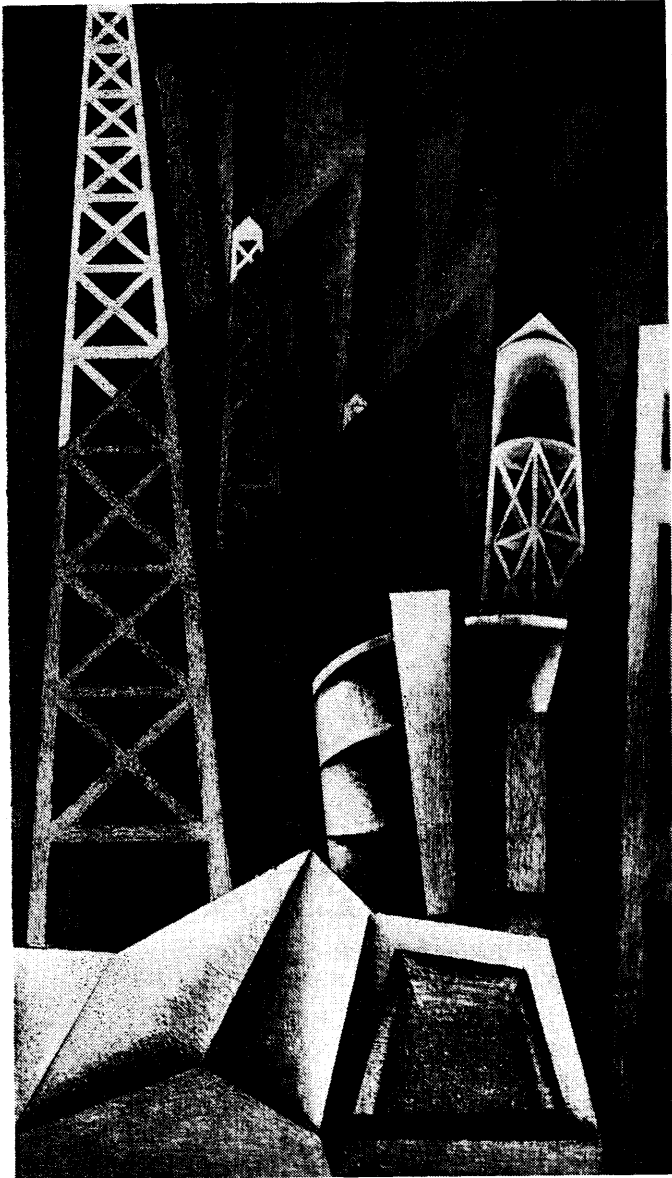
Old Henry flushed and looked flurried. It was his business to do the bossing, but he hated the job.

"Yes, Edd," he seconded, forcing a brisk tone. "These heads has all gotta be outa the way before the whistle blows, an' it's goin' to push us. The floor'll hev to go without cleaning today."

Edd threw aside the hose, a black scowl on his face. As he sat down before the stinking pile of slimy scraps he cast at Steve through narrowed eyes a look of concentrated hate, then set his teeth and dug into the revolting ooze.

As the afternoon wore on men went out and stayed longer at the toilet and their absence was commented on by the indignant ones who remained. Everybody grew restless, by turns sulky and irritable, cursing the stench, the cockleburrs and their sore and swollen fingers. The great piles of slimy, gray-white heads seemed as if they would never grow smaller. Whenever Henry the boss left the room the men dumped as many as they dared down the great refuse chute and washed them out of sight with a stream of water from a four inch pipe. Slowly, oh very slowly, they dwindled as the slow hours crawled by. The surface of the trucks was still well covered when the whistle blew.

With the first vibration of the whistle hands were in the basins being washed, hats and coats were taken from the hooks, and in three minutes there was nobody in the



Louis Lozowick

## Oklahoma.

room but old Henry left to put away and lock up. Some of the men plodded homeward across country, others filtered over to where the sun-blistered flivvers and bugs waited in a dusty line. A couple of Mexicans slouched around quietly to see if there was anything in the soap vat barrels that was worth taking home. Sometimes there was a pretty good butt end of a ham to be found there or a piece of fat that wasn't too rancid.

The red glow of the southern winter sunset suffused the whole yards with a soft radiance.

From a barrel in a blind alleyway Gus drew a black sheepskin, flung it into Long Steve's Ford which was drawn up close by and covered it quickly with a gunny sack.

"By gollies, if I gotta keep on gettin' up at half past five when that God-damned whistle blows, I'll just have someting warm to put my feet on anyway."

Long Steve, who had been standing guard, opened his coat and showed under his shirt the outline of a half yard or so of pressed ham roll, then closed it quickly, glancing around to see if anybody had noticed him.

"Slim Jim in the sausage room hid it out for me," he explained. "He's a good pal, Slim is."

He cranked the car and they climbed into the rusty contraption.

"It's about all the fun an' excitement we have, seein' what we kin pack off," mused Long Steve.

"Well, it's a packin' house, ain't it?" said Gus drily.

"Funny, ain't it," meditated Long Steve, as they rattled away into the red sunset. "Jake Allsopp who bosses the killin' floor swipes stuff off the railroad all the time. But he raises holy Hell if he catches a Greaser tryin' to get away with a bit o' stinkin' meat outa the soap vat barrel. I heard him say only the other day to a bunch o' fellers: 'Boys,' says he, 'I don't give a damn what you lift off the railroad; but by gad if I ketch you tryin' to steal from Fogarty you git your time.'"

"It don't stop there," said Gus, rolling a cigarette. "You remember that old railroad bridge over the draw that was left good for nothin' when they changed the road bed. Old man Slinkard bought it off the railroad for fifteen dollars. When Fogarty was buildin' his new ice house he needed some extry sleepers an' he sent his men down there to get 'em. When old man Slinkard found out where they'd gone he reared right up like a buckin' broncho an' lit for Fogarty. The end was Fogarty give him thirty bones apiece for the sleepers to keep it outa court an' keep his mouth shut. But everybody in Dry Flats knows all about it. So his boss don't need to act so top lofty when he catches a Greaser makin' away with a pig's trotter."

"Some says Fogarty didn't know anybody'd bought the bridge."

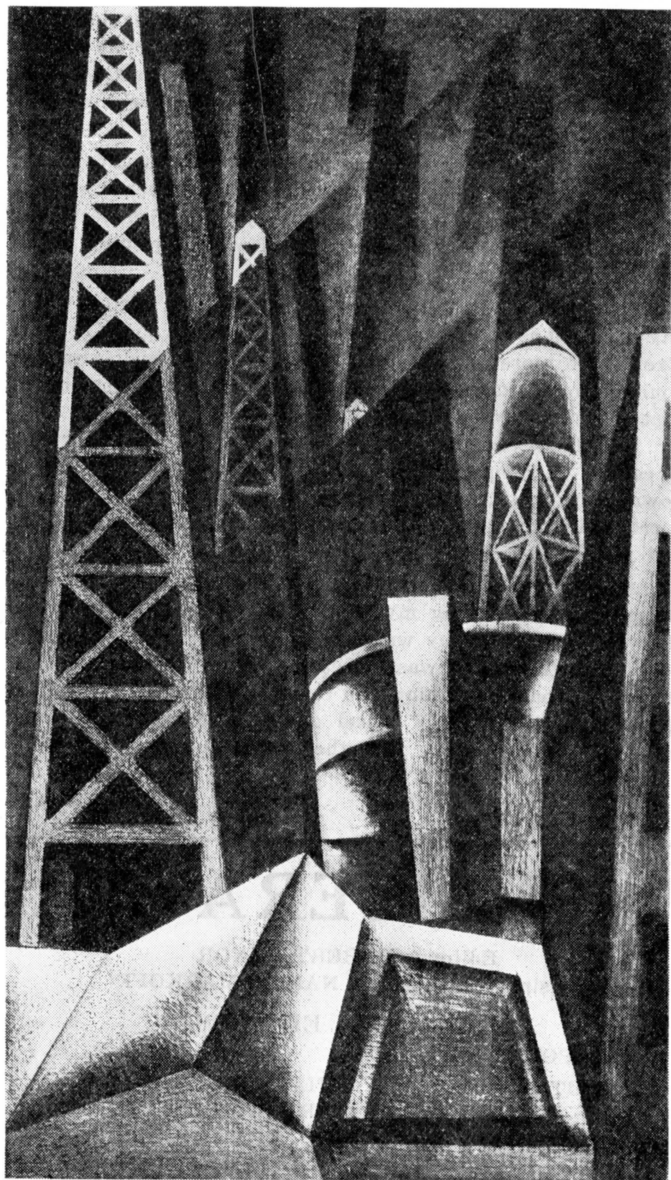
"Anyway, he knew damn well he hadn't."

They drove on silently into the red sunset.

As their old car bumped over the chuck holes, Figaro Contraras was sauntering home across country. He had nothing in his pockets and nothing under his shirt but a happy heart. He had not yet learned to slink and steal. As he drew near home the pepper trees that grow about his mother's little house, trees that trail like the weeping willows of the north, loomed black against the red sky from which the sun had dropped. They waved softly and seemed to Figaro like a girl's black, abundant tresses. Beyond them the sunset glowed like rich red wine. The swift southern twilight darkened about him, but overhead the sky was still like a great clear jewel. These things penetrated his being and made him happy, but he was not thinking of them. He was thinking of the dance hall, of eyes, flowers, earrings, soft arms and yielding waists and peachbloom that burned through brown.

As he went into the stuffy little house with its hideous wall paper, its crucifix and images and bright-colored pictures of the Christ and Virgin, his fat brown mother, tied up in a greasy apron, was frying tortillas at the oil stove and there was a good smell of fresh hot tamales.

"Gosh, maw, I'm hungry," he said, and sat down to the table.



Louis Lozowick

Oklahoma.

## A Letter

THE LIBERATOR has been saved. It is going somewhere, cutting its way through, with a fine edge and zest. It has the spirit of being the outstanding magazine of an outstanding time and it is going to be better. Let others take the leavings.

But meanwhile, what is to be the accepted position of the American Communist movement toward art that is monumentally an expression of this time? The answer to this question will determine the part The Liberator is to play in the creative art-life of the revolution.

Does revolutionary art take care of itself? I refer, chiefly, of course, to poets and painters, they being more involved than other kinds of artists in a discussion about The Liberator.

When a poet writes a poem, what does he do with it? Does he send it to a few friends, give away a few typewritten copies? Probably he does. But the most important thing he can do with it, aside from putting it in a book, is having it printed in a magazine. And there are many, many poets in America who want a magazine like The Liberator in which to print their poems. Magazines are very important in a poet's life. I have been writing poetry for ten years, thinking of myself every day as a poet, and now I have enough poetry written to make one rather small book. And for that I have no publisher. There are others like me, many others. And the interesting thing is that these poets do not feel they are having a very poetic experience when they send their poems to the New Pearson's, The Dial, The American Mercury, Harriet Monroe's magazine and others. Having poems accepted in those offices means seeing poems in print. But what does that amount to, when the poets know their poems are going among persons who do not interest them? Aside from the insignificant income from it, the business of publishing poetry in a magazine is altogether one of sending poems to friends. Revolutionary poets in America want The Liberator to be their typographical bard, carrying their poems hundreds of miles, across rivers and mountains, to halls and homes where they themselves cannot go.

Revolutionary art does not take care of itself. The liberals and reactionaries have their magazines, but aside from The Liberator the revolutionary poets have none. "Taking care of" revolutionary art would be a vital event, so vital that the word hard which I used a few lines back seems to be altogether too romantic and sentimental to account for it.

A favorite reply to this view has been that the new scientific analysis will be a breath of new life to the artists. That is true. Scientific analysis must go on regardless of art. But in the meantime art is being produced of a kind that in its own way is equally a breath of new life. Scientific analysis is not art and cannot replace it. I should like to see The Liberator take the leadership in that field too. I think it would be worth while. And when I say these things I am thinking of The Liberator as a party organ. Artists of the kind I am thinking of do not want it weakened as a party organ by any increased interest in art.

If art would be weaking to The Liberator why were the combined Finnish and Ukrainian choruses and the Finnish band permitted to take so prominent a place at the Lenin memorial meeting in Detroit? Why did the Daily Worker print "A Week" and why is it going to print Russian poetry of the Revolution? And why does The Liberator print any

poetry and pictures at all? I don't think it would be a weakening.

As a matter of fact, I should like to see the revolutionary movement strengthened by the morality and forcible loyalty of many artists. The capitalist class exploits "artists" and "art" but the art of which I am thinking I spell without quotation marks.

When it is understood that the revolution is under way, is being generated now, why is it not true, furthermore, that art is a significant part of revolutionary life and experience? The movement in this country is obviously becoming more cultural.

And since The Liberator is already using a certain quantity of art, it is simply a question of how much more or less. Even if no more is used than is used now, I wish a means could be found, an editor's means, for avoiding the appearance that art is merely filler. After all, art is pretty good.

And book reviews! Book reviews are very important, of course. It seems to me in The Liberator they are "played down" too far. Even the Daily Worker, dealing primarily in current significant news, has its criticisms of not only books and plays, but music.

A party leader in Detroit, an economist, recently referred, casually, to my having my "hobby" for after-hours activity. He was referring to my writing poetry and stories. I should not like to think that was increasingly the Communist point of view. Broadly speaking, the revolution is for a better life. A fair apportionment of bread and leisure is a more concretely visualized aim. And the enjoyment of leisure culminates in art.

Stanley Boone.

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# Literature and the Machine Age

By Floyd Dell

X.

PERHAPS—we young parliamentary Socialists began to think—we had been fighting doggedly on the wrong side. If it was the State which was the greatest obstacle to the achievement of human happiness, what were we doing with our parliamentarism but fostering it? Politics—a delusion and a snare? Let us withdraw from the State at least our moral support. . . . And perhaps—!

## Anarchists at Play.

But we were not living in the age of Bakunin, and we could not really believe in the possibility of overthrowing the State by force. To begin with, the State had all the force. And further than that, all our instincts were against the use of force. So, for that matter were the instincts of all the Anarchists we knew. There was not a Dynamiter among them; they were gentle, disillusioned, kindly people, who had ceased, like us, to believe in the superstition of State-worship. They had nothing in particular to put in the place of that belief, except a belief which we could not share—an old, eighteenth century belief in the natural goodness of the human soul.

We were more disillusioned than they. But we did not try to shake their faith; instead, we let them try to convert us. But they did not try very hard. Perhaps they did not really believe in it very much themselves. They had really only one thing to give us—a warm place in the circle of their kindly disillusion. . . . Out of the ashes of that disillusion was to spring a flame, kindling the fringe of the working class that was furthest from lace curtains and pianos, into a new boldness—syndicalism, the I. W. W. And in England, Anarchist ideals were to unite with medieval memories, in a new Utopianism—Guild Socialism. And all these were to find the test of their seriousness in the emergence of a militant Communist movement. But this was not yet.

One book more than any other served to break for us, who were in this mood, the bonds of sympathy which still held us to the old life of political hopes and plans. That book was Max Stirner's "The Ego and Its Own." It had nothing to do with the question immediately confronting us. It had nothing to do with economics at all. It had to do with the soul. It was, essentially, a religious tract—a compendium of pious consolations for weary minds; but it was couched in a philosophical dialect calculated to reach our kind of mind. To us, burdened with heavy hopes that had turned to fears about the State, it said: "What has the State to do with you?" It offered to set us free from that obsession—and from all such obsessions. It preached a naked freedom, a beautiful clean unhampered separateness of the soul. . . . And it was pleasant to put off these burdens of old belief. It was a relief not to have to worry about the State any more—nor anything else. It was like leaving a house with many rooms and a servant-problem, to go and live in a small, bare room. . . .

The Ego and its own. What is its own? Not these cluttering moralities, bric-a-brac that merely gather the dust, and are so easily knocked off and broken, and yet which occasion such tears of remorse when the inevitable happens. . . . Out they go! One after another, we threw

out of the windows of our soul its accustomed furnishings—the painted ideals, the silly cushions of social comfort, the things we have because everybody else has them. It got to be interesting to see how little a person really needed. Out they went, table, lamp and chair, bed and bedding, and the carpet on the floor. Finally nothing was left—just the Ego, lonely and triumphant. It was a magnificent experience. . . .

Of course we went out a little later and picked up the furniture that, to the scandal and amazement of our neighbors, lay scattered all over the front yard, and brought it back—most of it. And one of the first things we brought back, we masculine ex-Stirnerites at least, was the empty frame in which from time to time had been set first one and then another picture of the Not Impossible She.

We might for a time cease to trouble ourselves about the State; but we could not for long remain untroubled concerning Woman. . . . Max Stirner had offered to free us from the "ghosts" of old traditions and customs and sentiments; but here was a spirit from whose haunting we would never be freed.

We had gained from our excursion into Anarchism a certain spiritual benefit, not very different from the kind given by a month in a health resort, away from familiar worries; or better still, a lonely climb in the mountains. It had been a spiritual vacation from the real world and its problems, to which we now returned—somewhat invigorated and refreshed, but inevitably to be enmeshed again amidst its complexities.

Stimulated, however, by this brief contact with a surviving relic of eighteenth century utopian philosophy, our thoughts upon the subject of woman began to take on a more futuristic tinge.

If we had not been deeply impressed with the Anarchist ideal of a society utterly free from the brutalizing repressions of law, if we were unconvinced of the goodness of human nature when once freed from such repressions, there was nevertheless one aspect of life to which that ideal gave a seductive glamour. Our Anarchist friends themselves had seemed to lay more stress on the importance of Freedom in the relations of men and women than in the other relations of human society; and however conventional might be their own modes of life, in this as in other respects, yet it was always of their defection from the ideal in this particular that they spoke with the most chagrin. To live on rent, interest and profit, as some of them did, was a matter that lay lightly on the Anarchist conscience; but to have become respectably married to the woman one loved, was a cowardly surrender to the world, which they could hardly forgive themselves. They spoke, sometimes, of "John and Mary," who had been defying convention together now for nigh on sixty years. . . . Reverently, in a hushed voice, as of saints, they spoke of these aged exponents of the freedom of love.

It seemed to us, perhaps, a little humorous, all this pain to get the unfavorable opinion of their neighbors, on the part of a couple who might just as well have enjoyed a public reputation for their utter devotion to each other. More wildly preposterous still seemed the self-mortification of those idealistic couples who compelled each other to have

love-affairs that the other didn't really want, in order to demonstrate that their love was not founded on any vulgar sense of personal possession, and to prove themselves free from the horrid taint of jealousy. . . .

This pious martyrology hardly served to commend to us the principle of freedom which it was supposed to illustrate: it rather alienated us from that principle, by showing us how coercive Freedom could sometimes be. But the principle nevertheless left its impression upon our minds.

\* \* \*

#### XI.

OUR masculine ideal of women, at the stage when we last considered it, was the Glorious Playfellow. The development of our ideas on the subject had been proceeding on natural emotional lines. We had liked the newly emancipated self-supporting young woman, because she was comparatively freed from the home and its influences; because she was more with us, and more like us; because she took the shock and jostle of life's incident more bravely, more candidly and more lightly. She did not put an exaggerated and fictitious emphasis upon things. And among the things upon which she did not put such over-emphasis, were the incidents of our mutual relationship.

#### Modern Courtship.

She did not regard the camaraderie of friendship as the symptom of romantic love. She did not have to, and she did not want to. She was too much interested in living. Nor did she take love too seriously; she understood both men and herself too well for that. She was inclined rather to deprecate its potential seriousness, while speculatively tolerating in herself, and in us, a warmth of manner that would have been, in the previous generation, an admission of mutual love which could end only in marriage or the blackest treachery. We were, in fact, finding out, by the trial-and-error process, and without any embarrassing preliminary commitments, just how much of each others' society we could stand. In the back of our minds, no matter how cynical our words or how apparently frivolous our actions, there was the ancient mutual if unconfessed desire for a permanently enduring relationship.

It was a rough, free, wild kind of wooing, which was perhaps not so utterly different from the actualities of Victorian life as from the chastened pictures of that life presented to us in discreet Victorian fiction: different from those past actualities, that is to say, not so much in form as in environment—for we had a wider and totally unchaperoned world to play together in; different not so much in substance as in attitude—for we had dispensed with the tears, the qualms, the desperation, the remorse, preferring to take more sensibly and with an understanding smile the unpredictable and inconsistent manifestations of a passion which we well knew to be the unstable product of a host of conflicting reasons and impulses; different enough in these respects from the Victorian courtship, but in the end the same. We and they were trying to find our mates.

#### The Problem of the Home.

But here a new aspect of the home opened itself to our young masculine view. We had viewed that institution in the past from the outside, as it were. It was always somebody else's home—our parents' home, or hers. We had now to consider the question of the home from a different angle. We ceased to consider angrily the bars of the cage; we began to notice thoughtfully the amount of expensive gilt on the

bars. We would not perhaps so much have minded carrying off one of these splendid wild creatures, and shutting her up in a prison; we knew she would find a nice comfy prison a not wholly disagreeable change from the inclemency of the free out of doors. We were not really bothered about her. We were bothered about ourselves. The establishment and upkeep of a nice comfy prison is a serious undertaking for a young man—more especially for an idealist, who by definition is innocent of the talent for the more unscrupulous and enterprising kind of economic gain. He hesitates to assume a responsibility which may all too quickly become inescapably sealed with the fact of parenthood. He realizes that the essential fact about the Home, the thing which distinguishes it from the hall-bedroom, the garret and the studio, is that it is a place where one's beloved can, and does, bear and bring up children. It is a disconcerting discovery.

We may suppose this to have been, to the young women themselves, no discovery at all. If they had a different attitude toward motherhood than their Victorian ancestresses, it was in conceiving it as not so much the crown and glory of a woman's life as one of the most interesting of its adventures. It had its difficulties, its penalties, but so did every other kind of adventure, to a minor degree. It was indubitably a more serious kind of adventure. You could go into a profession, knowing that you could drop it whenever it got tiresome. But you couldn't have babies, and drop them whenever they got tiresome; and you knew that they would get tiresome. Perhaps some day things would be arranged so that a mother needn't be so tied down to her children: but it wasn't that way now, and it would get pretty monotonous. It was unfair that modern life should put so high a price on the adventure of motherhood. But they did not intend to be bluffed out of the adventure by however high a price. They wanted babies.

All would have been well enough if they had been generally content—as they were, in many cases—to accept the flattering attentions of young men, or men not so young, who were sufficiently unidealistic and hence unscrupulously enterprising in the field of economic gain to be in a position to provide the comforts of a domestic prison. But some of them were not content.

They had been out in the world, and learned to be a boon companion to men. They found that the men who were more interested in success than in ideas had but the slightest capacity for boon companionship—at least with women. Besides, these men did not want a boon-companion for a wife. They wanted someone who could cheer them up after business hours. They wanted a wife who could at least in dramatic pretense give a good imitation of the earlier Nora, in the doll stage of her career, whenever it was required.

Moreover, these successful men, who were successful by virtue of a certain delimitation of imagination, were incapable of understanding and sympathizing with a modern woman in this matter of the restriction of their freedom by motherhood. She didn't mind so much having to give up her freedom, if the man understood. But these available husbands didn't even want to understand. It hurt their egotism to think of there being anything that a woman wanted that they couldn't give her. But what if they did give her nursemaids; they couldn't—or wouldn't—ever help her back to the old free adventurous life in the world outside the home. They couldn't give her that, and so they refused to entertain seriously the idea that she wanted it. They were willing to

do anything for her to make her happy, but she had to agree to be happy with what they were willing to do for her.

Perhaps such young women had gained, in those years of companionship with us, a taste for the specific kind of companionship which we unsuccessful idealists could provide. We offered them sympathy and understanding, and in their gratitude for this they forgave us our failure to offer more. Besides, they had learned to be candid, and they could not stand living with men they had to pretend to all the time. They wanted in their husbands, the kind of young idealism that we had.

In fact, they wanted us.

We wanted them. We were hurt, as by a betrayal of loyalty, whenever one of them did marry a successful business man and retire from our jocund midst. But seldom did we try to prevent her going by anything so forthright and unequivocal as a realistic discussion of a home in the essential, expensive and baby-sheltering sense. We talked of how romantically beautiful it would be to go adventuring through life together, but we didn't specifically and emphatically include the adventure of parenthood. When we talked of babies, it was in some large, vague, eugenic way—as though they were interesting theories—and in round numbers, thousands of them at a time, but never particularly of one of our own. . . .

#### Free Women.

It was at this juncture that masculine idealism came to our aid, and furnished what I have called a specifically masculine development of the feminist ideal, though its success lay in the readiness with which it was accepted and believed in by women as a justification of this masculine failure to assume the responsibility of parenthood.

The book with which this new ideal is associated is Edward Carpenter's "Love's Coming-of-Age." But it would be unjust to say that it preached any such notions as the one with which we have to deal. What it did, by its so sympathetic, so delicate, and so profound discussion of the subject of sex, was to reassure us upon the point of our emotional conflict between the desires born of impulse and the fears based on economic conditions. We were made to feel that the traditional norm of conduct in the relations of the sexes was not as fixed a thing as our limited experience had led us to imagine; that the familiar institutionalization of this relationship in family life was too narrow a form to include all the possibilities which that relationship had to offer; that in times of economic change, such institutions became particularly inadequate to the full expression of the love-life of mankind; and that in these very periods of economic stress, and in the variations from traditional conduct which they promote, are created the new and finer forms of association—Love's true coming-of-age!

Was it indeed possible, that in us, in our inability and unwillingness to assume traditional responsibilities, there was the condition out of which a finer type of love-relationship should evolve? We did not ask this question; but we answered it. . . . We had cultivated of necessity, but to a perfection of its own, the kind of companionship between the sexes which is based on economic independence. We had, perforce—but with an ardor which we alone could give—realized the possibilities of a kind of love that brooks no interference with personal ambition, which leaves the lover and the beloved free to pursue each their own purposes,

which brings personalities together in a delicate tangential intimacy that does not impair their individual and sacred freedom.

We had in fact played together so long that it was easy to conceive a life of playing together as the new and finer type of emotional relationship, the Love of the Future. We had had to avoid responsibility so long that we made freedom from responsibility our ideal. These young women wanted our companionship; well, it was to be had, fully and freely, upon these ideal terms. If they were of the Past, they might go marry their old business men; if they were of the Future, they might live the free untrammelled love-life of that future here and now.

There was in this no necessary defiance of the institution of marriage, in the sense of refusing to go before a clergyman or registrar for a "ceremony." That was a concession to custom which might well be endured for the sake of its resulting conveniences, if such were apparent. Nor was there any formal abrogation of the function of parenthood; in fact, it was quite the other way—there was a definite assumption of the right of a woman to have a child whenever she wanted to. It was an adventure which no one had the right to deny her! But it was her own adventure. The theory, indeed, made no mention of the masculine evasion, it appeared simply as a feminine heroism. The Free Woman would choose her own life: she would not be made by custom or a man's wish, but only by her own free will, the mother of a child. When the adventures of work and play should pall, there would be time to consider that further extension of her activities. But when the time came, it was to be her own affair; she would ask no man to support her child. Did not women by the thousands, deprived of economic support by the vicissitudes of life and death, support their own children? She had her career, which childbearing should no more than temporarily interrupt; were there not hundreds of examples of women who found the bringing up of children compatible, and happily compatible, with a career? It was simply a question of whether being women meant an inevitable limitation of their human activities. If they were not regular human beings, but only sexual beings, let the fact be humbly accepted, and the harem taken as their proper sphere. But if they could be human beings and mothers as well, let them take up the double burden without complaint.

It makes no difference to the consideration of the literary influences and idealistic attitudes here under discussion, how many young women succeeded in carrying out this difficult but not impossible plan; how many of them found themselves obliged to call upon their husbands or families for the despised traditional subsidy of motherhood; nor how many of them let it remain a heroic theory, and accepted childlessness as the not necessarily tragic price of companionship with the lover of their choice. The only point which concerns us here is the trend of idealism under certain influences, in the direction of a novel non-participation, by young male idealists, in the responsibilities of family life. This is a step further than the renunciation of responsibility toward society-in-general.

But if it successfully eliminated babies, as too troublesome a part of the world of reality for harrassed idealism to deal with, it still included real women and the serious and very real relation of love. These also were to be largely

eliminated from consideration by the further developments of masculine idealism. in a small but significant sphere of social life.

It will be by this time apparent that the literature upon which we grew up had thus far failed in the task of enabling us to face realistically the world in which we lived. It failed, because its efforts to interpret that world to us, to give us such conceptions of it and of our relation to it as would make life worth living, had not borne the test of experience. It succeeded only in its other function, that of enabling us to blink the full import of realities, to accept without shame the indignities of life, and to evade with some dignity our responsibilities toward a world in which such indignities were inflicted.

#### Naked and Unashamed.

There is no reason to quarrel with the necessitous compromises which we have been considering in the realm of sexual relationships; and there is every reason to admire the courage with which so many young women undertook their heavier burden in that compromise. What we have to criticise is the meekness with which we young male idealists accepted a humiliating situation simply because it was an economic fact; and the failure of imaginative literature to make us face its humiliatingness. Capitalism had deprived us of the opportunity for responsible fatherhood, and had compelled upon the young women who preferred our society an indecent choice between childlessness and something too much resembling martyrdom. And we were not angry at capitalism. We did not seriously consider the possibility of changing that state of affairs. We did not entertain the notion of balancing the heroism or the sacrifice of our sweethearts by some heroism or some sacrifice of our own in the way of an effort to reshape this sorry scheme of things entire. There were no works of imaginative literature to make us feel that they should. But there were an increasing number of imaginative writings which served to help reconcile us to our situation, which deepened our cynicism with regard to violent social change, which enabled us to think very well of ourselves, and even to regard our laissez-faire, do-nothing selfishness as a pattern of social heroism.

(Continued in the July Liberator)

### Floating Workers

**T**HE HARVEST days have labored to a close,  
The farmer's house inhospitable stands;  
How strange and stark the trampled stubble-lands!  
How bleakly chill the furrowed fields' repose!

The grain is reaped and stored. It's time to go  
Unbidden and unblessed to other fields;  
To us the earth no compensation yields,  
Though at her call we hasten to and fro.

Yet it is well. The men who lie on feathers  
Grow soft and come to grief. Let us away!  
Privation and the sting of bitter weathers  
Will lash us into competence some day.

Charles Oluf Olsen.

## REVIEWS

### A Substitute for the Devil

"Political Action: A Naturalistic Interpretation of the Labor Movement in Relation to the State." By Seba Eldridge, B. J. Lippincott Co., New York.

TRUE science is radical, in the literal "root" sense of the word. Hence Prof. Seba Eldridge's book in which he attempts to analyse the medium of instinct and habit in which political action must function is a book for radicals—for radical radicals, that is. At least it is a better book for radicals than for liberals, whom the analysis leaves practically nude in a very scientific and draughty universe. For that matter, the radicals do not come off much better, except perhaps those radicals who, frankly forswearing Utopias, conceive the social scene as an arena of perpetual, necessitated conflict, and occupy themselves with the technique of liberating a subordinate and oppressed class. For such this book should supply ammunition worthy of the foe—that is, the only sort of ammunition which is any good.

Professor Eldridge, having adopted the naturalistic approach to his subject, supplies no credo for True Believers of any stripe. His conclusion, expressed concisely toward the end of the volume in connection with his criticism of John Dewey's God (a hypothetical Education which will completely liberate the individual from the Devils of fear, the fighting impulses, and those of individual and group self-assertiveness) is in favor of a concept of limits within which the social process develops.

"Within these limits," writes Professor Eldridge, "lies the opportunity for a more competent political science and a more enlightened education to do their work in improving the lot of mankind."

The nature of these limits, as the author conceives them is painstakingly set forth in the first half of the book, in which he relates the findings of the social psychologists (chiefly McDougall and Thorndike) to current factors of politics, particularly the labor movement. Professor Eldridge also takes account of the behaviorists in a controversial chapter in which he adopts a middle of the road position agreeing approximately with that stated by Dewey and Cooley. In rebutting the more extreme claims of the behaviorists he achieves a jest which in itself should be sufficient to confound certain lay critics who have alleged that the social psychologists lack humor.

"If sexual intercourse is a habit," he inquires, "when did the habit become general?"

In order to avoid arousing unwarranted expectations, however, it should be said that the sally quoted stands almost alone in the volume of some three hundred and sixty pages. In general, the author wastes no time, but proceeds soberly and with admirable competence about his business of elaborating the various instinctive impulses and showing their application to the political scene. The chapters on the class struggle and on political liberalism are particularly noteworthy for their balance and acumen.

Unquestionably the argument of the volume constitutes a destructive critique of liberal democracy—or rather, our illusion of liberal democracy. In the editor's introduction, Prof. Edward Cary Hayes endeavors to blunt the edge of this critique, declaring that he himself takes a more hopeful view of the degree to which the obstacles opposing the success of democracy may be overcome by legal and educa-

tional methods. Certainly, a point is scored for liberation when a liberal editor and publisher sponsor a book which, notwithstanding the dispassionate objectivity of its naturalistic method, is uncompromising in its exposition of the iniquities of the status quo.

James Rorty.

## The Irish Lenin

"James Connolly: His life Work and Writing." By Desmond Ryan. Labour Publishing Co., London.

DESMOND RYAN'S book marks the first serious attempt to give James Connolly, the leader of the Irish revolt of 1916, his proper place in the ranks of those who have left their impress on the world movement for the emancipation of the working class. Connolly's position as a Socialist he summarizes in the first chapter as follows:

"Broadly speaking, James Connolly must be classed as a Worker's Republican and Communist. The doctrines and methods that the Russian revolution has since familiarized were his. He certainly would have been one with Lenin in destruction and construction alike."

By several and divergent factions in Ireland today Connolly is claimed as their own. The official labor movement claims him; the faction opposed to the official labor movement claims him. So does the Republican movement when it suits the bourgeois politicians who dominate that party. Why is there so much confusion about where he rightly belongs?

We believe that the reason for all this confusion is that Connolly died at a time when the revolutionary movement was undergoing a deep change; when the Socialism of the Second International had proved itself bankrupt and the revolutionary opportunism of the Third International was not yet in being. Connolly did his turn on the world stage in the historical twilight that marked the passing of the philosophy of revolutionary patience which assumed that capitalism would vanish without the aid of a proletarian kick, and that it was rather sinful than otherwise to place any obstacles in the way of the peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism. Connolly was a prophet of the new order, and scorned social pacifism.

When the world war broke out and the socialist leaders of the warring nations, who had at many International Socialist Congresses pledged each other the lifelong love of brothers, joined their governments in pitting the workers against one another, Connolly condemned them as traitors. He declared: "When the first note from the bugle of war broke out upon our ears that note should have been taken by the working class of Europe as the signal for Social Revolution." Here was no petrified pervertor of Marx talking. Here was a Revolutionary Communist. Desmond Ryan never said a truer word than when he said that Connolly belongs to us. Of the many misfortunes the Irish working class have suffered none is greater than that Connolly should pass away before he had time to build up a Communist Party that

would continue his work after a British cabinet, with a Socialist among its members, should send him into eternity before a firing squad.

Ryan quotes generously from Connolly's writings and indulges in some predictions as to the probable course Connolly would take during the past few years of turmoil in Ireland. The author believes Connolly would be in favor of bringing the warring bourgeois factions together. This is a mistake that is to be expected from a pacifist. While Connolly had no more desire to see bloodshed than any other Communist, he had no interest in healing the wounds of the bourgeoisie. It is more likely that he would have seized power for the workers and peasants while the bourgeois factions were cutting each others' throats and declared a Workers' Republic for which the masses were ready at that time.

James Connolly was born of poor parents in the north of Ireland in the same year as Lenin. His early life was one of poverty and hardship. And poverty was his companion until his execution in 1916. At the age of 20 he was a candidate on the Socialist ticket in Edinburgh, Scotland. After many years of activity in Ireland, England and Scotland he went to America in 1903. He was active in the S. L. P., the I. W. W. and later the Socialist Party. He organized the Irish Socialist Federation and published a monthly magazine called "The Harp," with the object of getting the Irish workers to break away from the capitalist parties, and of loosening the stranglehold of the Church on them.

He returned to Ireland in 1910, took part in the great Dublin strike of 1913 and had charge of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union after Jim Larkin had left for the United States on a speaking tour. He organized the Irish Citizen Army with Larkin and others and it was his army that, though small in numbers, was the backbone of the challenge to the mighty British Empire in 1916.

While lying wounded and awaiting execution Connolly is alleged to have said: "The Socialists will not understand why I am here." But as J. T. Murphy, the British Communist, says of him: "The revolutionary Socialists do understand and greet James Connolly as one of the valiant few who by their deeds rescued Marxism from sterility and led the way into the epoch of social revolution."

Connolly's alleged Catholicism is stressed by some of his pseudo-friends—now that he is dead—but no more damning indictment was ever delivered against the Catholic Church than what is between the covers of "Labor, Nationality and Religion." If Connolly did not stress his views on religion over much, we prefer to believe that he considered it good tactics not to do so rather than that he held to a belief in the Catholic religion all his life. It is also extremely doubtful that he made his peace with the Church before his death, though it is a favorite trick of the priests to badger a dying rebel and claim that he recanted. This was done in the cases of famous heretics and the Catholic Church in Ireland could gain much and lose nothing by spreading a report that "another socialist on his death bed, confronted with the unknown, made his peace with Rome."

While the reader is warned against taking some of Ryan's conclusions without subjecting them to critical analysis, the book is honestly and interestingly written and will give a real insight into the real James Connolly.

T. J. O'Flaherty.

# A Poet Contemplates Revolution

By Edwin Seaver



SKETCHES BY JULIAN DE MISKEY

It is past 8:15. It is growing late. The show will soon be starting. Taxicabs slide up out of the darkness for a momentary place in the electric lights of the Garrick Theatre. The door is inevitably opened by the Negro lackey who doffs his hat like a monkey, pipe dreaming of improbable tips. 8:20. Now the limousines begin to pull up. Ermined and sabled ladies trip it lightly across the crude asphalt to the theatre lobby, flurries of gossip. The gentlemen follow, canes sprouting from forearms.

The school teachers, the serious thinkers, the Guild subscribers were seated long ago. All, all, my friends, have come to see a play of social revolution.

\* \* \* \*

The curtain rises. What the devil? Do you call this a show? Two college students dressed like laborers stand on each side of Blanche Yurka—no, of the Woman—no, of humanity—talking about a general strike. The husband enters. (I mean the state, of course, though he looks very much like a bookkeeper dressed for his employer's funeral). He talks about duty to the state. She is torn between her own life and her love for him. And because she wants to stand on her own feet, he declares he will divorce her. He won't have any damned radical tainting his honor.

Allons!

\* \* \* \*

Scene two is a dream scene. The stock exchange in the Woman's heated imagination where the ghouls (not the Goulds) fatten on human flesh. But who ever saw a stock exchange look like this? Though the fellow with the cigar does look like the elder Morgan. That's a good one. He proposes an international brothel corporation to keep the soldiers happy. Captains stay all night; corporals one hour; privates fifteen minutes. The ghouls bid away and finally, at vespers, Morgan and company kneel down in holy worship of the recorder. The great god capitalism having been appeased, the bidding continues. In vain does the Woman plead with them to realize there are human beings upon the

earth. They hear nothing. Until they hear of mine explosions and other disturbances. Whereupon, in a frenzy of generosity, the elder Morgan proposes a charity bazaar right then and there in the stock exchange with lots of booze and lots, oh lots of women.

The setting is interesting mildly ejaculates a young thing applauding perfunctorily.

\* \* \* \*

The curtain rises again in darkness. Rises over the chant of the dispossessed crying out their woes in the black of oppressive night. The poetry, the rhythm is superb.

These are the workers. But the pronunciation of the words is abominable. Or rather, it is too fine: These are only Theatre Guild supers you say to yourself. Light comes. Comes upon the Woman pleading for a general strike to put an end to the workers' woes.

But suddenly from the masses springs a wild, decisive creature commanding the woman to be silent. It is Ben-Ami. It is the spirit of the masses. It is something awe-inspiring and superb and terrific. He calls for revolution. He calls for an end of oppression. He calls for the workers to take over the power. And expressing the will of the masses as he does, he wins the day. Unwillingly and yet, alas, only too willing to believe, she joins with the others.

The revolution is proclaimed. It is commonly agreed among the audience that the scene was very nicely presented considering the sort of stuff it contained.

\* \* \* \*

Scene four is in the barricades. Again projected through the Woman's fevered imagination. The gallows looms big in shadow and underneath the revolutionists execute a wild, macabre dance of freedom, of released inhibitions, of glorious, good, kind, sweet human nature with the lid off. The husband is taken out and shot. The Woman is sorry. We were not.

\* \* \* \*

The revolution is defeated. It was bound to be. Here was no conscious leadership. Here was blind, stupid rebellion without guidance, destined to fail in its objectives since,

# A Poet Contemplates Revolution

By Edwin Seaver



SKETCHES BY JULIAN DE MISKEY

meeting force with force, it had not the preponderance of that quality. The revolution is defeated, the workers are slaughtered, the Woman is taken to prison to be executed by those whom she cannot find it in her heart to hate.

\* \* \* \*

Scene 6. The Woman in the Garden. Humanity on the way to the cross. Upon her seems to fall the guilt of all these helpless slaughtered ones. But she feels that the guilt cannot fall upon humanity. But it must fall somewhere. Humanity nominates God to the office. God is guilty; humanity is free from sin. The sunlight falls upon Blanche Yurka's face.

\* \* \* \*

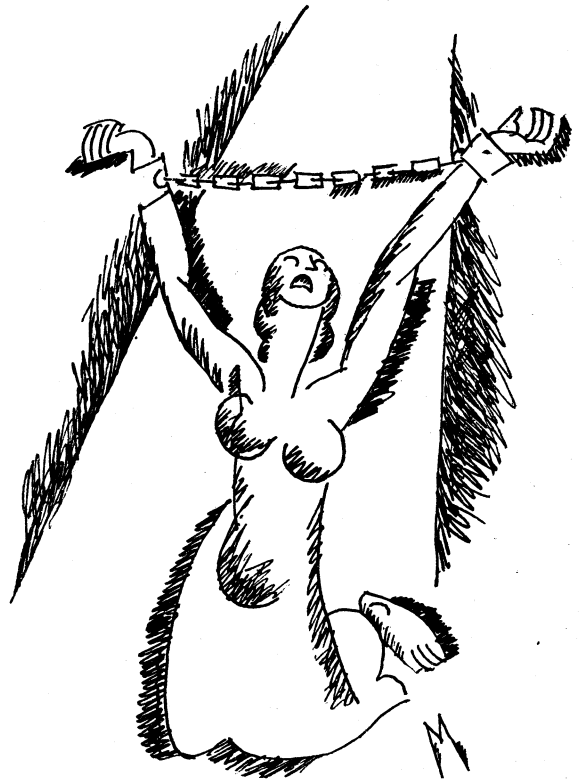
The last scene finds the Woman in prison awaiting her execution. She has three chances for freedom. One, the state, which she refuses. Two, the church, which she spurns. Three, the masses, who will kill one of her killers in order that she may escape, whom she shrinks from in horror. You were born too soon, says the spirit of the Masses. She goes to her death a martyr to her faith in humanity.

\* \* \* \*

What have we here, then? Surely not a drama of social revolution. Rather a play of the poet contemplating social revolution. Which is a distinction that cannot be overstressed, since in that distinction homage is paid to Toller's intellectual honesty and tribute to the truth of his poetry. He realizes that life is life, that human beings are human beings, that revolution is revolution. He is not fool enough to apologize or to condemn. But he is in duty bound to himself to speak out freely concerning the impact of reality upon his own spirit, and he does this in poetry that is great and strong and agonized, in a drama that is tremendously impressive.

\* \* \* \*

It will be claimed by the more Orthodox that this is not revolution. That this is rather a burlesque of revolution, merely a mob losing its head and running amuck. For revolution as we know it today is a pretty scientific affair and



does not rest upon mere mass explosion. That explosion must be directed, the fiery fluid stuff of rebellion must be conducted along proper channels if it is not all to be wasted and defeated. And that revolution is worth the price of life or worth nothing at all is quite ably proved by comparisons, say, of the Russian and the Hungarian revolutions.

However, all this is quite beside the point. The point is that *Masse Mensch* pictures a poet's questioning of revolution. The logic of that questioning may be poor and muddled, the will to it is the will to pull away from stupidity and mob action. We may not at all agree with Ernst Toller's conclusions. But we cannot fail to respect him as a man and as a poet, we cannot fail to acknowledge him as a truly inquiring and rebellious spirit. The questions he proposes he may not answer to our satisfaction. But the questions are always with us and must be answered by each in his time.

There will be greater plays about social revolution in time to come. There will never be a greater attempt.

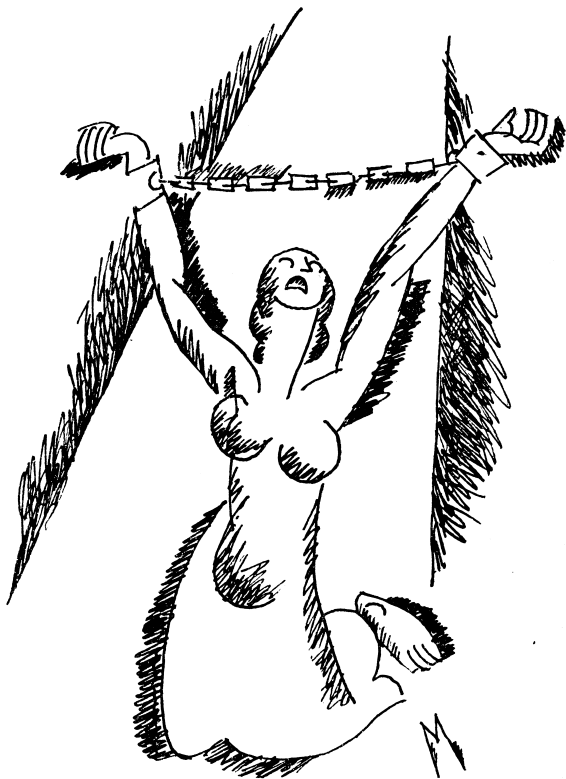


## They Have 'Em There, Too

"Mince Collop Close." By George Blake. McBride, New York.

NOT being a Scot I stared at this title in bewilderment. What did it mean? Suddenly its American translation flashed upon me—why, to be sure! "Hash Alley!" And "Hash Alley" it is, the story of an impossibly gorgeous red-haired queen of an impossibly terrible gang, the Fan-Tans of Mince Collop Close. A new sort of "penny-thriller" gotten out much too grandly, but chock-full of thrills.







## The Arrow-Collar Menace

"Americanism, A World Menace." By W. T. Colyer. Labour Publishing Company, London.

WHATEVER social, economic and political forces are at work today are to be found crystallized in American institutions. If the term "Americanism" can be abstracted from its purely local meaning, it will do very well as a description of the concrete results of the progress of the past century.

To admit, then, that Americanism is on trial before the bar of public opinion is to admit that virtually the whole of our modern economic, industrial and political system is on trial. And the recent flood of critical literature on the subject leaves little doubt that Americanism, from providing the accepted standards by which achievements are judged, has become the subject of severe analysis. While the forces for which Americanism stands gather strength, the theory of Americanism is being put on the defensive.

The literary apostles of this attack are many, and each has his own peculiar methods and his own limitations. H. L. Mencken, while undoubtedly sincere in his criticisms, does not propose to be cheated of his fun; after setting fire to the rubbish-heap of present-day standards, he is content to stand aside, happily fiddling his own praises while his flames consume both reputation and reason. Ludwig Lewishohn raises a voice of protest that would be more convincing if it did not break spasmodically into a whimper; we feel that he could strike down the offenders to better advantage if he did not stop so often to stick out his tongue. As for Upton Sinclair—his sincerity is very nearly his undoing. At the same time that we admire his work is exposing organized selfishness, we cannot help wondering why his naive indignation is as easily aroused by the interference of the press in his breakfast habits as by the interference of this same press in the activities of sweated miners.

A more mature tone pervades W. T. Colyer's book, "Americanism, A World Menace." By methods wholly impersonal, he effects an impassioned appeal. He is clever without being smart; he becomes indignant without seeming childish; he can demand honesty without appearing naive. The most convincing thing about the book is its large perspective.

The essence of American standards Colyer finds in four essential points:

1. An overweening pride of race. . . . Known locally as patriotism.
2. The establishment of dollar-producing or dollar-collecting capacity as the absolute standard of value. . . . Known locally as 'practical idealism.'
3. Glorification of "democracy as an abstract idea, divorced from practical control by the rank and file.
4. General lawlessness and contempt for orderly procedure . . ."

What gives us additional faith in the soundness of Colyer's judgments is his appraisal of a certain well-known magazine, of which he writes:

"As for education in the wider sense—including the development of appreciation for vital poetry, of feeling for

what may be called the new art, of capacity for independent thought and criticism upon life—the only characteristically American undertaking of which the writer has knowledge, is that of the handful of writers and artists grouped . . . around the radical Bohemian monthly formerly known as "The Masses," more recently "The Liberator." Prominent among them was the heroic John Reed, who met his death on revolutionary service in Soviet Russia. Max Eastman, Howard Brubaker, Charles W. Wood, Floyd Dell—to mention those of the living whose names spring first to mind—have poured invective or ridicule upon everything for which machine-made Americanism stands. Even more scathing have been the satirical cartoons of Art Young, the fanastic but irresistible sketches of William Gropper, and the sombre, heart-searching, truth-revealing drawings of Boardman Robinson and Robert Minor—the latter of whom, by the way, is almost as great when he writes or speaks as when he draws. Nor could the most thoroughly Americanized gaze upon the unconventional artistry of Cornelia Barns or Lydia Gibson without some glimmer of awareness that there are things not dreamed of in his philosophy; while the austere beauty of J. J. Lankes' woodcuts is a standing rebuke to the hideousness of contemporary American life.

"Yet there has been something so elusively, yet unmistakably American about this whole onslaught on Americanism that even a good '100 per cent' jury declined to convict the editors when they were indicted. By the Democratic administration under Woodrow Wilson, The Liberator was illegally denied the cheap mailing privileges to which American periodicals are entitled; but in the summer of 1921 the excess charges to which it had been put were refunded by the Republican Postmaster-General, Will H. Hays. Was it because Mr. Hays realized that unless social revolution makes an end of Americanism, Americanism in no long time will make an end of The Liberator?"

In its ruthless indictment of everything American—press and religion, ethics and law and education—the book recalls the indignant symposium of a few years ago, "Civilization in the United States." In its sound constructiveness "Americanism" is different. The method which Colyer advocates is the only possible solution—the militant activity of the working class, united in opposition to industrial feudalism.

Elsa Bloch.

*Full name and address of contributor must be plainly written upon each separate manuscript and upon each drawing sent to The Liberator. All contributions must be accompanied by postage for return. The address of The Liberator is 1113 West Washington Boulevard, Chicago, Ills.*

## Once Over

"Mirage." By Edgar Lee Masters. Boni & Liveright, New York.

SOME more chapters in the life of Skeeters Kirby, product of mid-western America, born into the hectic life of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Skeeters started out by being too fine for his contemporaries, drifted into the law and an intense love affair with a woman who was cursed with the illusion that she was "brainless" when she was merely neurotic. Skeeters rejects the devotion and understanding of a truly fine and intelligent

woman who had learned to have a firm grip on life through having had to fight her own way.

Poor Skeeters! He is one of those half men who need a woman to make them complete, and unfortunately are drawn to those women who will weigh them down instead of bouying them up.

We take leave of him most appropriately, seated in a cemetery, dreaming of Becky, the foolish, uselessly lovely "will-o'-the-wisp" of modern middle class civilization.

Ida Dailes.

"Salvos." By Waldo Frank. Boni and Liveright, New York.

**I**N this volume are collected a number of critical essays written in the years 1919 to 1923, the subject matter ranging from Dickens and Shakespeare, through Charlie Chaplin and Broadway, to the Greenwich Village Theatre and the Art of the Vieux Colombier.

There is vigor and clarity in Mr. Frank's criticism, a far cry from the the straining after subtle expression and self-conscious style of some of his novels and short stories. The book is an extremely interesting estimate of the work of Mr. Frank's contemporaries and is characterized by boldness of thought and breadth of vision.

I. D.

"Unfinished Tales from a Russian Prison," by M. E. Harrison. Geo. H. Doran Co., New York.

**L**IBERALS pride themselves on reading both sides of every conflict; most of them, it must be confessed, in practice read neither side and show their "liberalism" by a self-righteous disagreement with everyone else. Myself, I read both reds and whites, the reds for information, the whites for entertainment. No one who has grasped the fundamentals of Marxism can help enjoying the chaos, the indignations, the loose stringing of poorly authenticated "facts," in such books as Corbin's "Return of the Middle Class," Stoddard's "Revolt Against Civilization," or Cecile Tormay's "Outlaw's Diary." (The last shows a naive surprise that the rebels actually—put their social betters in jail!) "Unfinished Tales" was a pleasant surprise to me—chapters from the lives of fourteen feminine Cheka prisoners. They are well written, the incidents are very interesting, and the book is not made ludicrous by anti-red hysteria. The characters are varied—prostitute and noble (that is, professional and amateur), communist, S. R., and patriot, peasant and fink jostle in its pages. Of course the author is hostile; she pictures Soviet administrations as a sink of inefficiency, graft and savage terrorism.

George McLaughlin.

"Antic Hay." By Aldous Huxley. George Doran Co., New York.

**T**HERE is a very subtle recognition of the hungers and thirsts of our day in Aldous Huxley's novel, "Antic Hay," and brilliant handling of characters and dialogue. Theodore Gumbriel, Junior, abandons the hopeless task of correcting the themes of his stupid pupils, and goes to London in search of adventure. There follows a keen and grotesquely tragi-comic exposition of our fantastic civilization. "Antic Hay" carries its bundle of ideas with more athletic grace and agility than any book that I have seen this winter.

L. G.

"Adventures in Journalism." By Philip Gibbs. Harper and Brothers, New York.

**A** GARRULOUS, journalese account of fifteen years as a reporter. Much of it is picturesque and very interesting—his exposure of Doc Cook's Polar claims, his activities on behalf of the monarchist political prisoners in Portugal. We are reminded of old "thrillers"—how Peter the Painter and two other gunmen barricaded themselves in a tenement and, armed with Mauser automatics, held it against the London police and the Guards regiments, finally firing it and dying in the flames; how Doctor Crippen murdered his wife and eloped with his typist, a passionate little Cockney, who made a great hit with the young Philip what time her lover "danced upon the air;" how Bleriot flew across the Channel, and the lives and deaths of the heroes of primitive aviation. More of it is intensely tedious—the coronation frills of His Majesty George V., Balkan mimic wars, pages of sentimental slosh about the World War and the author's tours of the U. S. A.

The book is shamelessly padded and it is hard to decide whether the author is silly enough to consider the twaddle worth recording or whether he accurately estimated Mrs. Babbitt's taste for tosh and proceeded to gratify it. One interesting fact that slipped out is that Comrade Gibbs toured Russia and gathered the material for his venomous attacks as the guest of the American Relief Administration. It is pleasing to learn how the A. R. A. used its facilities and funds. The A. R. A. under the leadership of Hoover did its best in the end of 1921 to hamper the raising of funds for famine relief by the Quakers and Friends of Soviet Russia.

G. McL.

"James Joyce: His First Forty Years." By Herbert S. Gorman. B. W. Huebsch, New York.

**T**HE disciples of a master have always had a hard time interpreting him to the laity, but Mr. Gorman finds the consistent thread through all of Joyce's works and presents it as part proof of his syllogism: Major premise: All great artists have been misunderstood, unappreciated, etc.; minor premise: James Joyce has been misunderstood, unappreciated, etc.; conclusion: James Joyce's "Ulysses" is a greater work than "Faust," and it puts in the corner such comparative mediocrities as Rabelais, Petronius Arbiter and Dostoievsky. However, Mr. Gorman's purpose, he admits, is not so much critical as expositional. And as a review and analysis of the esoteric Joyce the book is worth reading, once the author's enthusiasm is discounted at the regular rate for "Dial" contributors. It brings Huneker's essay up to date and effectively assassinates the Joyce interpretation of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. Thrill hunters will find in Mr. Gorman's book only two or three titillating quotations from "Ulysses."

Max Shachtman.

*Readers having copies of Charles Ashleigh's poems, published or in manuscript, are requested to send them to the author. His address is 1917 Club, 4 and 5 Gerrard St., London, W. 1., England.*

"Behold this Dreamer!" By Fulton Oursler. The Macauley Co., New York.

UPON the strength of Upton Sinclair's ecstatic chant in the May Liberator, I went forth and bought the Great Novel of the Age, and found that I had invested in two dollar's worth of the most stomach-turning nonsense, sexual and aesthetic, that has come my way for a long, long time! It reads as though written by a pathetically repressed and anal-erotic child of fourteen, who has been completely misled as to the simplest and most basic psychic and physical mechanisms of love, or art, or ambition—or any other human motive. It is amazingly infantile in its fantasies, and amazingly crude. The only question in my mind is whether all this obscenity is sincere, or is very cunningly planned to titillate the timid, who, under the mask of "high idealism," like to indulge in all sorts of nonsense that they imagine to be "evil." The paper jacket is bestrewn with praises of Mr. Oursler, the "artist," all written by hirelings of Mr. Oursler, supervising editor of the MacFadden publications.

L. G.

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